

إستقصاء دافعية ، توجّه وتفكير تلاميذ المدارس الابتدائية في العراق نحو تعلم
اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية

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كيفية اقتباس البحث

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Investigating Iraqi Primary School Pupils' Motivation, Attitude and Thinking towards Learning English as a Foreign Language

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المخلص:

أن التوجه هو عامل رئيسي في تحفيز الأطفال على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تتناول هذه الدراسة الدوافع والاتجاهات لدى التلاميذ العراقيين الذين تتراوح أعمارهم بين 8 و9 سنوات نحو تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية. تم استخدام أداة ورقية بدلاً من المقابلة الشخصية مع الباحث لتقليل العلاقة غير المتكافئة وتشجيع التلاميذ على التعبير عن آرائهم بحرية. تم تصميم الدراسة للإجابة على الأسئلة التالية: (1) ما هي دوافع المتعلمين لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في مراحل حياتهم المختلفة؟؛ (2) ما هي نوعية المواقف التي يحملونها تجاه تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية؟؛ (3) ماذا يعتقد المتعلمون عن الأشياء التي تعيقهم أو تساعدهم أكثر أثناء التعلم؟؛ (4) ما الذي يحبه المتعلمون وما الذي لا يحبونه في تعلمهم للغة؟؛ (5) هل هناك فرق بين المبتدئين في وقت مبكر والمبتدئين في وقت متأخر في تصورهم لتعلم اللغة؟ . تم إجراء مقابلات مع أربعة وستين تلميذاً في مجموعات من 4 إلى 8 مجموعات، جميعهم من الصفين الثالث والرابع، حيث يُشار إليهم بـ "المبتدئين المبكرين" و "المبتدئين المتأخرين" على التوالي. تم اختيار

أربع مدارس ابتدائية (مدرستان للبنات ومدرستان للبنين) والتي تتمتع جميعها ببنية تحتية جيدة ومعلمين مدربين تدريباً جيداً. المدارس تقع في محافظة بابل / العراق. تشير النتائج إلى أن تركيز التلاميذ الأساسي كان على تعلم اللغة في أبسط صورها، أي أسماء الأشياء في محيطهم المباشر، بالإضافة إلى فرصة السفر إلى الخارج أو العثور على عمل كبالغين.

Abstract

It is argued that attitude is a key factor in motivating children to learn English as a foreign language. This study examines the motivation and attitudes of 8–9-year-old Iraqi children toward learning English in a foreign language context. A paper-based instrument was used instead of a face-to-face interview with the researcher so as to minimize the unequal power relationship and to encourage the pupils to express their opinions freely. The study was designed to address the following questions : (1) What are the learners' motives to learn English at different stages of their lives?; (2) What kind of attitudes do they have towards learning English?; (3) What do the learners think about things that hinder or help them most while learning?; (4) What do the learners like and dislike in their language learning? ; (5) Is there a difference between early beginners and late beginners in their perception of language learning?. sixty four pupils were interviewed in groups of 4 to be 8 groups all from third and fourth classes where they referred to as 'early beginners' and 'late beginners' respectively. Four primary schools have been selected (two for girls and two for boys) which all have a good infrastructure , and well trained teachers. The schools are located in Babylon Governorate /Iraq. The findings indicate that the pupils their primary focus was learning the language in its most basic form, i.e. the names of objects in their immediate surroundings, as well as an opportunity to travel abroad or find employment as adults.

Introduction

Over the past decade, Iraq has significantly engaged with the global community through various commercial and diplomatic endeavors. According to Bao et al. (2012), Iraqi students have enrolled at a variety of educational institutions around the world in order to acquire English. Motivation is a key component of learning a foreign language since it motivates and improves the usage of English by language learners (Gardner, 2007). For decades, studying foreign languages in the lower primary years , has been part of the tradition in Iraq. A foreign language must be studied by children starting in Grade 1 (age six); formerly, this requirement applied to Grade 4 (age nine). Even though the curriculum



states that learning a foreign language starts at age six, many pupils start studying it in kindergarten due to pressure from their parents to do well. Due to the declining birth rate, primary schools are in competition for students. Since parents have a say in which schools their children attend, the program given can make the difference between the school's survival and failure. Young children are thus forced to learn a foreign language at school while having little opportunity to interact with their surroundings outside the classroom. Films are dubbed, most people in Iraq speak just one language, and people in this age group hardly ever interact with foreigners.

Similar to many Arab nations, Iraqi students occasionally employ incorrect terminology and tenses when attempting to use English (Bao et al., 2012). Their reduced motivation levels may be the cause of this. According to the research of Albodakh and Cinkara (2017), a large number of Iraqi students think that their lack of motivation makes it hard for them to learn English. Learning activities are hard to accomplish without students' motivation. Teaching materials should be chosen in relation with the students' motivation , Abdulasoul (2012).

The National Curriculum states that the main objective of language education is to assist pupils in becoming more proficient in communication (NC, 2004). The goal of studying a foreign language is to be able to use it in everyday situations. Additionally, starting in Grade 5, schools use assessments, marks, points, and tests (mostly written). According to a study on code-switching in primary language classrooms, as well as the opinions and beliefs of teachers, it is crucial to inquire about students' reasons for learning the language and classroom procedures in order to obtain a reasonable judgment. Therefore, the goal of this study is to ascertain the learners' motivation for learning English and the activities they like to do.

Literature Review

Many studies, in recent years have examined the attitudes and motivations of young children toward learning a foreign language (see, for example, Elliott & Hufton, 2003). The investigation of the relationships between the attitudes of the young learners and their motivation for learning is the main focus of the majority of these studies, which employ traditional questionnaires. Though they were not intended to investigate whether there was a cause for learning something at a certain moment, these investigations give students the chance to consider their motivation for learning in general.

In primary school, young learners' motives for learning English have a significant impact on their English language acquisition. These

motives affect the primary school pupils' commitment to learn English, as well as their perseverance and level of dedication to language comprehension (Tulgar,2018). Thus, two or more intrinsic motives may simultaneously inspire a primary school learner, increasing the student's engagement in English language learning. This implies that primary school pupils studying English may be motivated by a variety of factors at the same time, which affects their involvement, engagement, and commitment to the

Young Learners' Intrinsic Motivation

Some primary school pupils find learning English and communicating in English to be interesting and exciting, which motivates them to acquire the language as another language. Students experience self-satisfaction as a result of learning because they believe that they have accomplished a significant milestone by becoming proficient in speaking English (Oudeyer & Kaplan,2007). The ability to write and speak English is the reward for learning the language as a second language, which this paper considers to be a significant accomplishment. This kind of drive is known as intrinsic motivation or internal motivation. Since self-satisfaction is the main source of intrinsic motivation, learning English becomes the primary motive for students learning the language (Alizadeh,2016).

Students in primary school who see learning English as a success may also be more motivated to pursue it as a second/foreign language (Wang, 2022). This is what is known as achievement motivation, which is what drives pupils to acquire English. Opportunities and chances that students who have acquired and mastered English as a second/foreign language will have are the foundation of achievement motivation for pupils learning the language (Rachvelishvili et al.,2017). English language learners who are driven by achievement motivation see learning the language as a way to feel accomplished, which makes them strive for perfection, which they believe that they can get through learning the language (Liu, 2015). Therefore, achievement motivation is the drive for specific success and excellence on the part of the learner and is independent of any outside motives that may be provided once the student has mastered English language Pupils in primary school who are motivated by achievement motivation experience anxiety when studying English.

Young Learners' Attitude

One of the biggest drivers of learning English as a second language among primary school pupils is their attitude toward the English language community. Primary school pupils may have favorable or



unfavorable opinions on English language communities (Effendi,2022) .When primary school pupils who are learning English as a second/foreign language have favorable opinions about the English language community, they will be inspired to learn the language in order to comprehend its culture and be able to live like its members. Since students primarily study English to become like members of the English language community, these encouraging factors boost their engagement and commitment to study the language as a second/foreign language in primary school (Tulgar,2018). When students feel negatively about the English language community, they lose interest in learning English as a second/foreign language. Their commitment and perseverance are diminished, and they spend less time learning English as a second language, which results in less practice speaking the language (Alizadeh,2016).

Primary school pupils who have a favorable attitude about English-speaking societies are thus more motivated to study the language as their second/foreign language than those who have a negative attitude. English as a Foreign Language learners can successfully integrate into the language with a positive outlook, which encourages them to learn it . The favorable attitudes of the pupils are a result of an internal process that makes their attitudes intrinsic motives, even though the teacher is a member of the extrinsic English language learning environment (Alizadeh,2016).

Previous Related Studies

Many scholars have already done a lot of research on Iraqi EFL motivation. These researches concentrated on a number of related topics, including the many forms of motivation, the instruments used to learn the target language, and the goal of motivation in the target language learning. Bao et al. (2012) investigated the variables influencing Iraqi second language learners studying in Australia. The results showed a positive correlation between the two types of motivation—integrative and instrumental. The primary drivers behind the learners' decision to study English were the two forms of motivation. Their research also showed that female students had lower motivation levels for learning English. A study was carried out by Abdurassoul (2012) to find out how Iraqi students were encouraged to enroll in English programs . According to his research, the students were more driven by integrative than instrumental motivation.

Similarly, Albodakh & Cinkara (2017) investigated the relationship between vocabulary size and the motivation of Iraqi EFL learners. To

collect data from the participants, their study used a questionnaire and a vocabulary size test. Their study clearly showed that female students had higher levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The results showed no positive correlation between vocabulary size and student motivation. Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine the learners' motivation for learning English and to find out what activities they like to employ to do so.

Research Methodology

According to deMarrais and Lapan (2003), qualitative interviews are used when researchers want to get additional information from participants about a particular event, phenomenon, or set of experiences. Using interview questions based on the participant's previously provided details, the goal is to assemble as complete a picture as possible from the participant's words and experiences. This is only possible if the participant is given enough freedom to share their depth of knowledge on the research question during the qualitative interview. The objective is to find out how that individual views a specific experience or phenomenon that is being studied. As a result, this study was designed using a qualitative research approach using an interview to reveal how EFL students think about learning English.

The Study Questions

The questions addressed in this paper relate to the pupils' thinking, attitude and motivation towards learning English. They are as follows:

- (1) What are the learners' motives to learn English at different stages of their lives?;
- (2) What kind of attitudes do they have towards learning English?;
- (3) What do the learners think about things that hinder or help them most while learning?;
- (4) What do the learners like and dislike in their language learning? ; and
- (5) Are there differences between early beginners and late beginners in their perception of language learning?

Participants

During the academic year 2023–2024, young English language learners from four primary schools in the Babylon Governorate's center participated in this study. The researcher spoke with pupils during breaks and observed them several times. Permission to interview the pupils was requested and granted once a positive rapport had been built. . In September 2023, following the summer holiday, pupils in Grade 3 and 4



were observed and questioned. The distribution of pupils by school is shown in Table 1. Four groups from each school took part in the study since classes in Iraq are divided up into groups of 30 to 35 for each grade year.

Sixty-four pupils in the third and fourth grades (ages 8 to 9) took part in the study. Each of the eight groups received instruction from a different teacher. The four schools—Al-Muhaj and Khawla bint Al-zewar primary schools for girls, and Al-Grbiya and Al-Fatimiya primary schools for boys—all have a remarkable reputation; their teachers are known for their great language skills, and they have extremely strong resources. . This early start satisfies parents' expectations that their kids should start learning English as soon as possible. In these schools, pupils in the third grade will be called "early beginners," while those in the fourth grade will be called "late beginners."

Table 1: The Participants from the Four Schools

Name of school	Grade	Number of groups	Number of pupils	Level
Khawla bint Al-zewar for girls	3	2	8	Early beginners
	4	2	8	Late beginners
Al-Muhaj for girls	3	2	8	Early beginners
	4	2	8	Late beginners
Al-Grbiya for boys	3	2	8	Early beginners
	4	2	8	Late beginners
Al-Fatimiya for boys	3	2	8	Early beginners
	4	2	8	Late beginners
Total			64	

There was not enough time to interview every pupil using the new technique, so eight pupils were selected for each of the two groups that represent Grade 3 and 4 respectively— The teachers were asked to choose from the middle range, from those who were having difficulty with the language, and from very good and articulate pupils—to represent

each group. At those schools, permissions were granted by accident, and the teacher insisted on working with every pupil because it would have been awkward to deny one of them the opportunity to participate, and that pupil would have been heartbroken. However, the sample would only consist of eight pupils in each school.

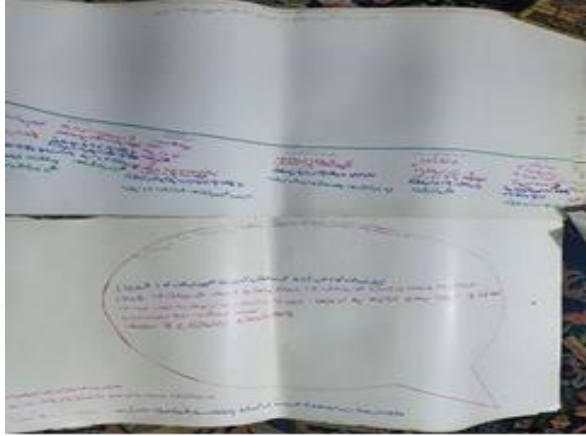
The Study Instrument

To find out how the pupils' opinions and attitudes about the learning environment, a unique tool was created. In order to reduce the unequal power relationships and to promote the pupils' freedom of expression, a paper-based tool (described below in figure 1) was employed in place of an in-person interview with the researcher. In the English classes, pupils were also encouraged to select from a variety of smileys to represent how they typically feel. A particular instrument was created to extract the students' opinions and attitudes toward the learning environment; what they believe the goals of learning and knowing English are at various stages in their lives; and what factors may hinder or help them the most when learning English. This interview involved 64 (sixty four) third and fourth grade students (ages 8 to 9). A paper-based instrument was utilized instead of a face-to-face interview with the children to reduce unequal power dynamics and enable them to openly share their thoughts. They were also asked to choose from a variety of smileys to represent how they often feel during English classes. An elicitation tool consisted of three large, pre-prepared pieces of paper measuring (80 cm by 58 cm). A series of open-ended questions were included in each tool, and children were instructed to write their responses on the page. The pupils were instructed to respond in their mother tongue, Arabic, which was the language used to deliver all of the questions. The elicitation tool's format was created to let students write as much as they wanted and to let individuals in the same group view the responses of other couples. Additionally, the large sheets of paper made the task less similar to a test or the type of form they often complete and get marks for.

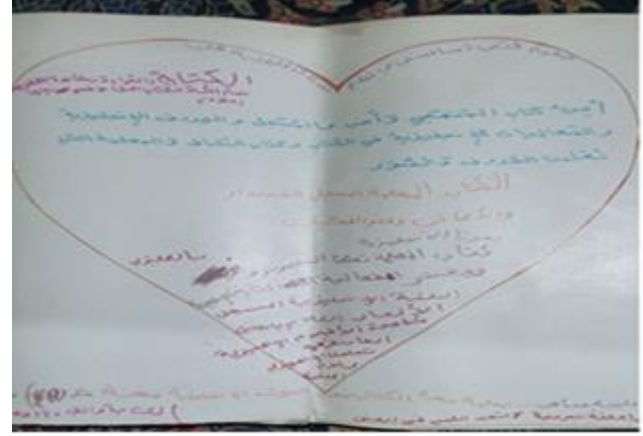
There were eight pupils in each elicitation session. Following their selection of a group, each group was placed on a table with a specifically made elicitation tool. After completing the questions, one group took a break while another group completed. It was thought that allowing pupils to work in groups and talk about their responses would encourage them to consider these problems together. It was a novel assignment for them to complete, and the researcher anticipated that they would perform better in

groups. In Iraq, children are rarely invited to share their thoughts in class regarding why they think they are learning anything or about their teacher's instruction.

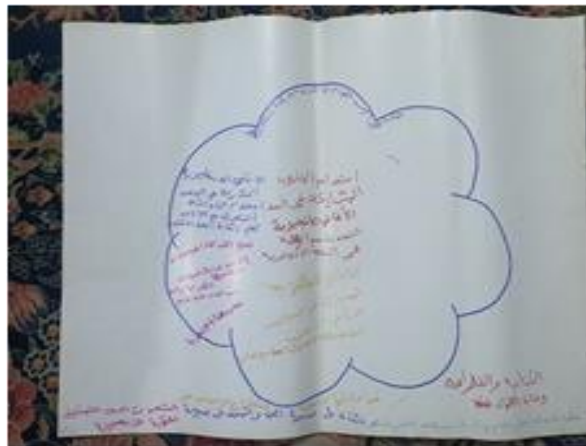
Questions 1 & 2



Question 3



Question 4



Smileys



Figure 1: photos of the questionnaires completed by the children, and picture of the smileys

The elicitation tool consisted of four large, pre-prepared sheets of paper measuring 80 cm by 58 cm (see **Figure 1**). A series of open-ended questions were included in each tool, and the pupils were instructed to write their responses on the page. As it may be seen in the Appendix, all of the questions were given in Arabic, the pupils' mother tongue, and they

were required to answer in that language. The elicitation tool's format was created to let pupils write as much as they wanted and to let individuals in the same group view the responses of other partners. Additionally, the large pieces of paper made the task less akin to a test or the type of form pupils typically fill out and receive grades for. Since each pupil received a different colored felt tip pen, it is usually possible to determine who wrote which response. One pupil commented, for instance, that English is "not good for anything" at the conclusion of primary school, secondary school, and college. The same pupil obviously scribbled "we can go to America" as well, completing the statement, "When you have grown up..."

The followings were the tasks on the big sheets of paper:

Question 1: The words "Knowing English is good, because..." were written on the first sheet of paper, which was a timeline drawn from left to right. After that, the following times were listed from left to right, just beneath the line: "Now," "next year," "at the end of primary," "in secondary school," "at university," and "when you are a grown up."

Question 2: On the second piece of paper, the following questions were displayed in a bubble: "It is good when my teacher speaks only English because..." and "but it is also difficult, because..." Due to space constraints, the answers to this question are not included in this paper.

Question 3: A large, red heart was drawn on the third sheet of paper, with the phrase "Things that help me to learn English..." written inside the heart and "Things that make it more difficult for me to learn English..." was written outside the heart form along the bottom.

Question 4: On the fourth sheet of paper, the questions were presented in a flower: "things I like to do during my English language lesson...." and **Outside** the flower : "things I do not like to do during my English language lesson....."

Along with a sheet of various smileys, the participants were instructed to select two or three, cut them out, stick them onto a different piece of paper, and write beneath them how they usually felt during English classes. They intended to complete this activity to pass the time before moving on to the next one. Lack of space in the present research also prevents the results of the learners' responses to this task from being included.

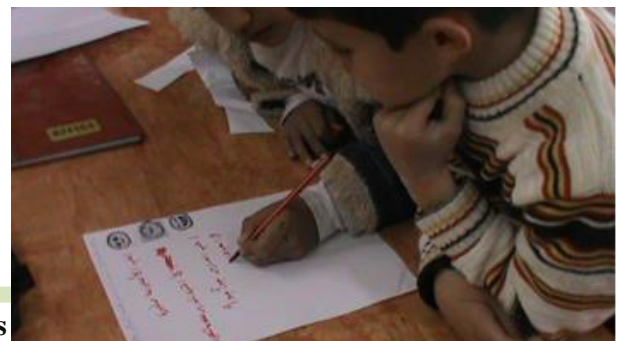
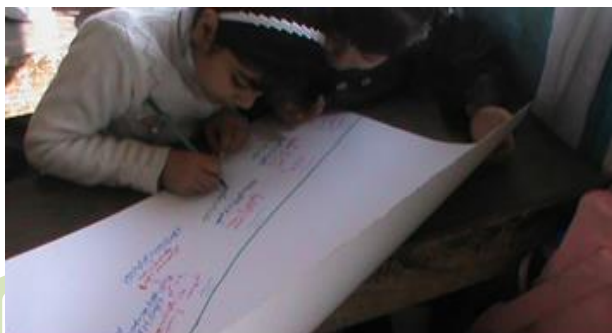
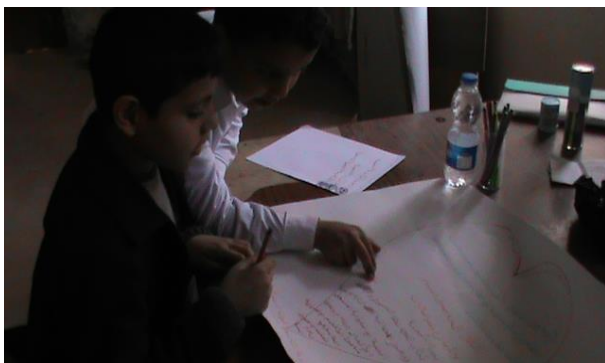
Procedures

First, at the start of the next school year (September), permission was obtained from the head teachers of the schools to conduct interviews with the pupils. After being chosen from the third grade, eight pupils were requested to take home a form for their parents to sign, granting permission for the interview .

The pupils who were chosen to participate in the elicitation activities were removed from class and worked with the researcher in a library or another convenient location, such as an empty classroom. There should be tables at each of these places, and they should be quiet with few people coming and going.

The elicitation task was initially expected to take 20 minutes, but all of the sessions took much longer. This was due in part to the time needed to settle in, but also to pupils' strong desire to spend as much time outside the classroom as possible—some of them even asked the researcher directly to allow them to stay for the entire 40-minute lesson.

After showing the pupils each questionnaire on a different table, the questions were read aloud, and the children began working on their responses. In order to let the researcher know that other pupils were thinking the same thing, the pupils were instructed to write as little or as much as they wanted to, and even if someone else came up with the same response, they were asked to write it down again if they thought the same thing. Participants were told by the researcher that they would be working in pairs and that they would write their responses on one poster and waiting for another to become "free." They would then proceed there to complete that task.



udies

Figure 2: Pupils working on the questionnaires in the library

Because each group was given its own page (**Figure 2**), students were free to write as much as they wanted and were also prevented from showing their responses to other pupils. They have the freedom to select their partners. The groups that finished first were pleasantly conversing with one another until the others were ready, and switching between questions did not appear to be as difficult as had been thought. Most of the time, pupils just talked about the questions with their partners, but some talked about the outcomes with each other as they went on to the next question. They were then instructed to complete the additional task on their own, cutting out the smileys and rotating without instruction.

Results

The students' written answers were first translated into English before being categorized. It was not always simple to accomplish this; for instance, learning English at the end of primary school was done "for exams," "for entry exams," and "for getting to secondary school." Understanding the Iraqi setting occasionally helped: pupils must take entrance exams created by specific notable schools where they apply for admission, as well as Baccalaureate exams. Therefore, it was determined that entrance examinations for getting into a reputable secondary school and those for finishing primary school were under the same category. However, instances in which a student wrote just "exams" were handled differently, presumably referring to Baccalaureate exams. The frequencies for each response are displayed in **Tables 2- up-to 4**. The totals are displayed in the third column, whereas the first column lists **early beginners** and the second **late beginners**.

•Pupils' Perceptions of Beneficial Factors

Regarding what the pupils thought would help them learn English, Table 2 displays the replies and their frequencies. For the early beginners who had been learning the language for three years, they made 30 answers to the games and songs whereas books, activity books, and the teacher were similarly helpful and significant (25 responses, respectively). However, hearing the language was the most helpful (21 responses) as well. The use of real materials in the class is (or are) crucial factor in explaining the meanings as twenty pupils mentioned. Others (16 responses) said that translating the text is (or can) also help in learning and understanding the meanings of words. Some of the pupils (10 responses) saw the reading, speaking, translating, and practice exercises as beneficial, and 13 said that



learning a lot also helps (or can help) . Going overseas is beneficial, according to seven students' writing.

The teacher was crucial (33 answers) for the later beginners . Books and activity book appeared to be important resource (29 answers) .While 23 pupils confirmed that studying hard is really required if they want to learn English ; 20 pupils mentioned practice .Additionally, 20 assured the factor of reading, speaking and writing in English , and 19 of them made use of hearing the language whereas for the games and songs ,there were 16 replies. Real materials in the classroom were viewed as being highly beneficial (17 responses), they also primarily involved text translation(11 answers) , and seven mentioned traveling overseas as a main priority.

Both early and late beginners mentioned classroom-related factors the most frequently and initially when asked how they learn a foreign language. For them, the teacher, the classroom activities, the textbooks, the practice books, the songs, and the games they employed were the most important factors. While early beginners realized that they needed to hear the language in order to learn it, late beginners believed that textbooks and practice books were crucial. It is obvious that the teachers are the key to their learning because they not only instruct them on what they need to learn but also assist them in pronouncing words correctly. This is particularly crucial because Arabic is nearly entirely phonetic and it is their mother tongue, making it considerably simpler to learn to read and write in Arabic than English. In addition to learning the meanings of each word, pupils must also be taught how to pronounce, spell, and write each one in English.

Table 2: Pupils' perceptions of factors help them in their learning of English

<i>Things that help me to learn English</i>			
<i>Answers</i>	<i>Early Beginners</i>	<i>Late Beginners</i>	<i>All</i>
Teacher	25	33	58
Books and Activity books	25	29	54
Songs and games	30	16	46
Hearing the language	21	19	40
Practice	19	20	39
Using real materials	20	17	37
Studying a lot	13	23	36
Reading, speaking and writing	10	20	30
Translating the words	16	11	27
Exercises explained	10	10	20

Going abroad	7	7	14
Parents	8	6	14
When we talk English not only in school but also outside it	4	8	12
Five lessons per week	3	8	11
Brothers and sisters	3	5	8
Paying attention	3	4	7
Lots of space	0	3	3
Learning in kindergarten	0	3	3

Table 3 shows that early beginners stated it was difficult to understand if the teacher spoke only in English (22 responses), yet 14 pupils in this group also revealed that not paying attention could make advancement more difficult. Nine responses also addressed the idea that knowing too much could make learning English even more difficult. Additionally, eight pupils believed that the teacher effectively contributed to the difficulty of learning. It was challenging for them to memorize the words themselves (eight replies). Teachers could add more difficulties to the process of children learning as they declared in their interview (eight answers).

It appeared that the late beginners would find it difficult to follow the teacher if they spoke only in English (31 replies). Another major issue (that) they had was pronunciation (20 responses). They also struggled with vocabulary (16 responses), and 14 of them acknowledged that language acquisition would be challenging without practice, while 13 pupils felt that having too much to learn made it hard to comprehend the provided materials. Four pupils said that the teacher was the reason they were having trouble. Three of them said the texts were very difficult to understand.

The majority of issues for both groups were the teacher, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and the language that was most frequently used in class. The early beginners provided some indication of at least one reason why the teacher made their lives difficult: they found it hard to follow the teacher's usage of English since, most likely, the level was not appropriate for their level of ability. Both groups had trouble with the words. On the one hand, their responses suggested that learning a large number of words was the primary goal, as teachers regularly administered vocabulary tests to ensure that pupils had retained the material. They also thought that learning would be challenging if they paid little attention and practiced less.



Table 3 : What pupils claim to make learning English difficult for them

<i>Things that make it more difficult for me to learn English</i>			
<i>Answers</i>	<i>Early Beginners</i>	<i>Late Beginners</i>	<i>All</i>
If the teacher speaks English only	22	31	53
Pronunciation	5	20	25
Vocabulary	8	16	24
Too much to learn	9	13	22
If we don't pay attention	14	7	21
If we don't practice	7	14	21
Teacher	8	4	12
Teaching aids	6	2	8
If nobody talks to us	1	5	6
Grammar	0	3	3
Texts	0	3	3
For me it is difficult to do	0	1	1
Nothing	0	1	1
Completion of sentences	0	1	1
Word order in question	0	0	0
If we speak only Arabic during the lesson	0	0	0

However, just five out of the thirty two early beginners reported having trouble with pronunciation, whereas pupils in the late beginner groups complained of this difficulty. Pronunciation may become a problem for the pupils as they grow older and acquire more and more words. Another argument that makes sense is that the late beginners began learning from a specific textbook with less oral instruction. Since the printed word is introduced in this book from the very beginning, it may be more difficult for these pupils to read texts, manage their pronunciation, and learn new words in print than it would be for those who learned the language orally in the third year.

The pupils Goals in Language Study: From Immediate Future to Adult Needs

The goals that the participants defined for the present, the near future, years from now, and adulthood are displayed in **Table 4**. In general, the

responses provided by early and late beginners to the question of why they believed that knowing English was beneficial now and over time were rather almost comparable. Late beginners stated that knowing English is to get good marks (twenty eight responses) whereas twenty answers from the early beginners. In contrast to twenty one late beginners, sixteen early beginners wrote that English "is good if you go abroad right now." Those were the noticeable variations. Sixteen late beginners only wrote "to learn," whereas only eleven early beginner provided this explanation. The three most significant things that were mentioned later in secondary school and at universities were getting to university, speaking the language, and learning more.

Both groups made it apparent that their primary goal in learning English as a main subject was to enroll in intermediate and secondary school (thirty responses from early beginners and thirty one responses from late beginners). When primary school ended, both groups believed they had to take a central exam. For both groups of pupils, "to get a good job" and the ability "to travel overseas" were the most important goal (29 and 31 learners; 19 and 25 responses, respectively).

Table 4: Reasons for learning English

<i>Knowing English is good, because.....</i>				
	<i>Answers</i>	<i>Early Beginners</i>	<i>Late Beginners</i>	<i>All</i>
Now	To get good marks	20	28	48
	If we go abroad	16	21	37
	To learn	11	16	27
	The earlier the better, easier	0	2	2
Next year	To pronounce the words	14	19	33
	To know more English, to learn	13	15	28
	If we go abroad	6	12	18
End of primary school	Get to a secondary school (Baccalaureate or entrance Exam)	30	31	61
In secondary school	To get the university	30	31	61
	To take to be able to communicate	17	22	39



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	To travel abroad	3	11	14
At university	We would know everything, speak and write fluently	29	31	60
Grown up	To get a job	29	31	60
	To travel abroad	19	25	44
	To be able to talk to people from abroad	11	13	24

In order to illustrate how they usually feel in class, students were asked to choose a smiley face as part of the study. Their emotional reactions to learning English were insightfully shown by this straightforward yet effective activity.

Some pupils chose a happy or enthusiastic smileys, indicating that they are self- confident, involved, and like taking part in language activities. Learning new words, reading aloud, or participating in language activities may make these pupils feel pleased. Positive emotional reactions frequently show that they are interested in learning more and feel comfortable with this subject.

Others chose calm or neutral smileys, suggesting that they are not highly involved in English classes but feel comfortable with them. These pupils may silently follow along without displaying strong enthusiasm. To assist them get more interested in the subject, they might require more creative or collaborative activities.

In other instances, pupils selected smileys that represented sadness, confusion, or frustration. This might indicate that they struggle with reading, spelling, or speaking out loud in English, or that they find it overwhelming. Teachers can use these emotional responses to recognize children who could feel anxious or disengaged during language tasks, as well as those who might require more assistance or encouragement.

Discussion

These pupils took the task of sharing their thoughts on their foreign language learning very seriously. They discussed the replies with one another after clearly considering them, and it appears that they made an effort to put their thoughts in writing, regardless of whether this indicated that their response was different or comparable to that of their peers.

The classroom procedures and the expectations of the parents and the school appeared to have a significant impact on their responses. They read, translate, and use texts a lot in their English classes. They are also

expected to learn new words and constantly memorize them by heart. Regular vocabulary exams, translations (often from English to Arabic), and oral recitals of the words, and songs by heart are used to assess their performance. For these, they receive marks—one or more marks every week in many classes. These marks determine their final grade at the end of the school year.

The pupils' secondary school admissions may be based on these final marks (together with their other subjects) at the conclusion of primary school. In Iraq, there is a strong competition for distinctive secondary schools, with good reputation where entrance exams being organized to choose the top individuals from a large population. English is highly regarded, and a lot of admission exams have written questions to make sure the selected students are already proficient in the language.

Pupils who are learning English as a foreign language from an early age are fully aware that their ability to pass exams and their degree of skill in the language will determine their chances of getting into a good school, getting into a university, and getting a good career. For them, mastering English has become a goal, and for their teachers, passing these tests is far more important than communicative proficiency. However, there is a contradiction: the National Core Curriculum (2004) encourages teachers to teach everyday language, but practically speaking, the emphasis is on teaching grammar, word learning, reading and writing, and responding to text questions in order to prepare pupils for tests and exams.

As it can be seen from the answers to the elicitation tasks, all of the learners indicated instrumental motives for their future goals because they believed that being able to speak and understand English would be helpful for other purposes in their adult life. According to some, the foreign language serves as a means of communication with people overseas, indicating an integrative motivation. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that none of the students cited any intrinsic motivation, such as the pleasure of learning and understanding English. Actually, just the contrary is true: a lot of the apparent issues are related to language, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and lack of attention. This is a vicious cycle since they are unable to consciously focus on tasks if they do not find the language learning activities themselves to be intrinsically motivating.

The role of the teacher is the subject of another noteworthy finding. Even though a large number of pupils rated the teacher as being the most helpful, it needs some explanation why the teacher was frequently in the negative category. If a large number of pupils find the teacher and her/his methods unsatisfactory, then classroom practice is most likely far



from ideal. In order to analyze the causes behind the teacher's frequent negative evaluations, it is important to triangulate data from classroom observations with the responses of the pupils from the four schools. Overall, the task of smileys is also a very vital instrument as it facilitated a crucial discussion on the emotions pupils experience when learning English. By encouraging pupils to use smileys to reflect on and express their feelings, teachers may better understand the needs of their pupils and modify their teaching strategies to make the classroom more engaging and helpful for all.

Conclusions

Teachers will be caught between two conflicting objectives until the above scenario is publicly recognized and either the curriculum's objectives or the use of entrance examination are modified. For the purpose of inspection, they can attempt to show pupils being open and communicative if asked to participate in a lesson. However, they and other teachers are well aware of what most likely occurs in these classrooms on a regular basis: attempting to pass exams, primarily through memorization of words in texts, vocabulary tests, and the well-practiced grammatical translation method.

The pupils are all fully aware of this, and they would consider certain factors that are assisting them in achieving these goals to be "helpful," while others would be perceived as "making it more difficult to learn." However, if the goal had been communication competence, these factors may have been completely different. Although this study is only a small part, the data presented in this paper indicate that students' perceptions of their learning are crucial for understanding the state of English language teaching and learning in Iraqi primary classrooms. The study has some limitations. Since just only two grades of pupils were sampled and there were only a few responses, it is impossible to draw broad conclusions. To find out if pupils from various schools and grades—possibly from outside of Babylon center—have comparable perspectives on learning a foreign language, it would be helpful to interview more of them in the future. For comparative purposes, it would also be interesting to do a comparative study with French language learners.

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