

Developing English language textbooks in Iraq between ambition and reality

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1-Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language had faced a great challenges concerning the effective methods that can be used in teaching .Before discussing the new and old methods ,it is useful to define the term (textbook).it is defined as collected materials by specialist for certain purposes.There are certain conditions for writing a textbook as follows:

- a-age and sex of the learners
- b-level or stage of learning
- c-the objectives behind writing the textbook

2-Historical Background

There are two main schools concerning language learning:-

a-Behaviorism

b-Mentalism

Behaviorism presented as (behavior).They emphasized on the relationship between language and behavior.They neglected at the same time the methods and techniques if they didn't contain behavior.Many theories appeared under this school.Each one of them emphasized on one main principle and neglected the other principles even if those principles have a great role in language learning.

3-The main principles of Behaviorism

a-repetition

It means repeating the action more than one time for the purpose of learning.e.g practising and repeating the dialogue or the song inside the classroomfor many times.

b-revision

The textbook repeat certain structures or expressions to give additional chance for learning.e.g repeating certain subjects in the same textbook like tenses.

c-trial and error

practising some of the activities to check the learners mistakes and working hard to overtake these mistakes.e.g writing free composition in each unit about different subjects.

d-motivation

it means urging students to improve their performance by using the forms of motivation:-

1-positive motivation by giving learners gifts ,marks or praising them by using words .e.g good,excellant.

2-Negative motivation by reducing the marks or giving low marks according to the learners' Performance.

e-environment

using the environment positively for explain the subjects for the purpose of better understanding the material to the learners.e-g using pencils or clothes in explaining the colors.

f-translation and memorization

some of

the methods emphasized on translating and memorizing words and sentences as a form of learning.e-g memorizing and translating words and sentences.

g-stimulus-response

it is a psychological principle used in language learning.it needs a condition for learning.

4-The role of teachers and learners

Teachers are active in all of the schools of Behaviorism .Teachers are doing 75% of the lesson .They are either doing or participating in most of the activities in the classroom.Learners are passive .Their participations is about 25% in the classroom.

5-Weak points of Behaviorism

The main weak points of Behaviorism are:-

a-most of the principles are taken by depending on experiments done on animals and learning a language is completely different from learning of animals.e.g(Geshtalt ,monkey)(pigs,rats, and dogs,)

b-they didn't give any attention to the internal factors of learners.

c-they emphasized on the external factors that can be seen and tested inside the classroom

6-Mentalism

It is the second school in language learning.They refused all the principles of language learning of Behaviorism.They assured that learners can learn with or without the the principles of Behaviorism.They emphasized on what they called the (innate capacity) of learners and neglected the other principles.Chomsky was the pioneer of Mentalism.

7-weak points of mentalism

a-they neglected the external factors and emphasized on the internal factors of language learning.

8-Behaviorism or Mentalism

The ideal method of learning is to combine the principles of mentalism (internal factors) for learning and Behaviorism(external factors).

9-The modern theories and methods of language learning in Iraq

a-the communicative approach

b-the eclectic method

c-the physical respond method

The main principles of these methods and approaches are:-

1-the new methods have the feature of flexibility to give the freedom to teachers to choose any technique in presenting the activities inside the classroom .

2-increasing the average of participation of learners to 75% and reduce the role of teachers to 25%.Teachers role is to facilitate language learning .

3-creating new techniques which add enjoyment for language learning and give achance to learners time and chance for learning.

4-it emphasized on the principles of Behaviorism and Mentalism for language learning.

5-It gives a chance to learners for actual use of the target language in different forms of performance in all the foreign language skills reading ,writing,listening and speaking.

10-References

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