

## Examining the challenges of teaching English in Iranian schools

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### Abstract

The educational environment in Iran, whether in lower grades or universities, is the cause of many problems for students and students, in middle school, with the wrong method of teaching and emphasis on writing skills, it extinguishes the first sparks of learning a new language, the educational system is an environment He has made dry both in writing books and lesson planning and presentation of English language, and the output of this cycle is only learning grammar rules, which are usually useless and useless. The current research was conducted using a library review method, the purpose of which was to investigate the challenges of teaching English in Iranian schools. Netabj shows that the lack of English language teaching hours, the lack of suitable educational facilities and environment, the low academic level of English teachers in schools, and the lack of use of modern methods, etc. are among the problems in English language education. which, if not corrected, can be one of the important challenging factors in achieving the goals of English language education in Iran's educational system.

**Key words:** educational content, foreign language, communication skills

## Introduction

Today, knowing English as a common language is a necessity because in this way you can share in the experiences of the people of the world and keep your knowledge up-to-date. The development of mass communication tools and the emergence of the global village concept, on the other hand, make the need for a common language to communicate even more necessary. Therefore, learning English has a special priority among the people of the world and knowing it is considered a necessity (Maqsoodi, 2019).

In Iran, English is taught as a foreign language and not as a second language in the middle years of education, this causes students not to communicate with this language (Hosseini, 2016). and communication has become a global priority, but in our country, language education, especially at the middle school and high school level, which is the cornerstone of English language education, is facing its own issues and problems (Kalantari and Gholami 1392: 100) Education English language in Iran is always one of the most challenging issues of the country's education system, although there have been improvements in the quality of English language education in Iranian schools in recent years, there is still a gap between what students are in this language and what they should be. There are many.

Since World War II, English language teaching has been involved in multiple temporal and spatial scales around the world. On a small scale, English is considered to be the native language of the citizens of English countries whose geographical location is clear on the map and at a certain point in time, it is used in different native forms. On a slightly larger scale, the English language is related to certain national cultures; That is, in educational institutions of other countries, it is taught in an assimilated format, and it is used according to the customs and rules of the particular dialect and native communities to which the dialect belongs, and on an even larger scale, English becomes a universal common language. It has been spread all over the world due to global digital technology, it is learned and used by many non-native speakers, and it is related to the global lifestyle of multicultural and multilingual people, whose basis of measurement is beyond national borders (Claire, You will pay Moini, 1400).

Therefore, how to teach English language is important according to the fundamental transformation document that introduces the official public education system as a social and cultural and organized institution, which is the most important factor in transferring the expansion and enhancement of culture in the Islamic society of Iran, the responsibility of preparing knowledge. It is the responsibility of the students to achieve a level of good life in all dimensions, which education is necessary or appropriate for the general public. He has education.

In a research entitled the role of curriculum change in the awareness and approach of English language teachers to the activity-based teaching method and its implementation in Iranian schools, Egmanhi Roudi and Hosseini (1400) have concluded as follows: Curriculums that use the activity-based method to Recognize and pave the way for them by preparing suitable books, allocating enough time, appropriate grouping of learners, and teachers' support for them, they can have a significant impact on the ability to implement these methods. The findings of this research also indicate that although the implementation of the national curriculum and the creation of new English language textbooks based on the communicative approach of language teaching has led to the improvement of language teaching methods in schools and due to the existence of some Activities in the textbooks of language teachers sometimes have to use the activity-based teaching method. The Ministry of Education should take more steps to implement the national curriculum more successfully than obstacles such as time constraints and crowded classes, which are one of the most important concerns of teachers. be resolved

Ahmadi, Ranjdoost, and Azimi (2013) in a research titled "Explaining the Experiences of Education Professionals from Obstacles in the Planning Levels of English Language Teaching in Iranian Schools" have concluded that English language teaching, due to the special characteristics of this subject, is always faced with problems. And there are problems associated with it, and it is tangible and prominent above all for teachers and lecturers who are directly related to education. According to the experience of educational experts in the field of English language teaching and taking into account the researcher's years of educational experience in this field, the researcher believes that the most important obstacle to English language teaching in Iranian schools is the low number of teaching hours at the planning level. English language due to the large volume of educational materials and the most important obstacle in the implementation layer is the lack of specialized and efficient teachers. In order to remove obstacles and improve the status of English language education in Iranian schools, the number of English language teaching hours should be increased. Textbooks should be updated and updated. The four language skills should be paid attention to, and expert and efficient teachers should be employed in the field of English language education. Paying attention to this will ensure that the costs and funds in the education system are not wasted.

### **problem statement**

Many believe that students do not get results from years of teaching and learning English in school, while the motivation to learn in many of them is with the increasing growth of English language schools and the acceptance of students to attend classes. It is clearly seen. Weakness of manpower in English language teaching, facilities, conditions, tools and proper environment, as

well as the implementation of incorrect methods of teaching it in the classroom, have caused the expected and desirable results of education in schools not to be obtained. Alireza Sharifi, an education expert, emphasizes that the content of textbooks needs a serious and general revision, and says: Although there have been changes in the content of language textbooks in recent years, these changes are not at the desired level. He continues: Of course, it should be said that lesson planning by those who are in charge of lesson planning is also important. This means that the teaching time of language lessons in our schools does not meet the needs of its learners (students). In addition, the method of language teaching in our educational system should be reviewed. According to this education expert, in order to learn any language, a child must first hear words and sentences, then speak, and after entering school, learn the letters of the alphabet and finally write. This is while many language teachers are unaware of the correct methods of teaching students. This means that they teach the alphabet in the first session of the lesson, that is, they do exactly the opposite. In this way, they learn to write, read, speak and listen in order.

Therefore, it is not possible to expect students to learn and use English. Stating that many of our schools do not have a language laboratory, while its existence is of great importance, Sharifi says: In a small number of schools that have a language laboratory, the high volume of lessons and the limited time do not allow us to use it. Of course, the few encounters and contacts that students have with foreign tourists, and teachers and students travel less to other countries, and the lack of English audio and visual media has caused students to not feel the need to learn English. On the other hand, if the teachers of all their courses are obliged to provide the students with a few pages of the specialized language of the same course for translation in addition to the lesson they are teaching, it will have an effective result. Therefore, the education system should create a feeling of need in the student. He considers the increase in the number of open schools in each discipline to be a measure of inefficiency in the provision of that discipline by education and says: This means that education has not fulfilled its mission well. While the family and especially the education system should consider the interest and motivation of many students to learn the language lesson with a fundamental change. Of course, retraining teachers' teaching methods should be prioritized. This education expert believes that the existence of national exams has made some parts of language education, for example, grammar, more prominent, while learning words and their use in sentences should be considered important for speaking and listening. However, this issue practically does not happen in our education. Hormoz Ansari, who has been teaching English to children for half a century by providing new methods and has authored 9 volumes of books on the subject, says about why language teaching is unsuccessful in schools: In school, children use language to get grades. They study and try to get the required grade in any possible way. Therefore, they have no motivation to learn it. This causes children to enter higher grades with different grades and levels, and sometimes even unsuccessfully. In

addition, the teaching and learning methods and the materials that are taught are not formed based on the interests and needs of the children. In addition, students are not grouped according to the English course materials and according to their preparation. Also, the language teachers in the school are not evaluated favorably, even they may be evaluated equally against unequal efficiency, which is also not true. He believes that learning motivations and the value of the results and learning methods should be revised and corrected. In addition, educational tools and equipment and educational assistance should also be provided. Of course, a lot of value should be given to the learner's need, desire and opinion about the teacher and his teaching method. The importance of learning conditions and space is not less than the teacher and learning materials. In addition to these, language teaching always needs innovation and transformation in all its dimensions. Of course, if we have good ideas and methods, but do not have a good organization, both of these will be lost.

### **Research implementation method**

This research has been done with the method of library studies, in which the key words and terms of the research are first examined, then the articles and theses related to the topic of the article are examined, and then the information related to the research problem and the research question are noted down and finally The obtained information has been analyzed. One of the problems in the library research method is that the researcher is faced with a huge amount of information. Therefore, it is very important that he first chooses reliable sources of information such as reliable scientific articles. Then, he should use the information that is in line with the research question to write his thesis and ignore the irrelevant material. In the data analysis stage, the writer must compare the collected data and draw conclusions. The library method, compared to other research methods, is a low-cost method that does not require much expertise; But in using other methods such as the field method, one must have the necessary knowledge on how to implement the research method in order to avoid wasting time and money. The first step in library research skills is to get familiar with how to use the library, that is, researchers should know about the library methods, how to use the data sheet and record book specifications, how to search for books in the library, as well as its computers, the rules for using and ordering books, etc. do For this, it is necessary to acquire the necessary skills by studying relevant sources and using the experiences of others, as well as the guidance of librarians. Usually, in writing most of the research, the library research method is used in the first phase. Because this method is an easy and cheap method and most of the basic information can be collected easily with this method.

### **Principles and policies of teaching foreign languages**

Most of the analyzed researches believe that the official education system of our country suffers from the lack of macro policies in the field of foreign language education, both at the school level and at the university level. including Alavi Moghadam (2011). (1391) and Dehmardeh (2009) pointed out this point and believe that the lack of macro and national policies in the field of foreign language education has caused confusion and bias in policies and the application of individual taste in the decision-making process. Compilation of foreign language curriculum guide has been one of the suggestions that are seen in most of the analyzes and researches that were examined. The lack of a national curriculum guide, in addition to creating confusion and confusion, makes the perspective and horizon of foreign language education unclear at the national level, and the change of management at the middle and even lower levels causes turbulence and unprincipled changes in this field. In addition to Alavi Moghadam (2011), Samii (2011) and Dehmardeh (2009), people such as Faruzandeh (2008) and Kayani (2011) also pointed out this gap in policy making and the development of such a program guide is one of the necessities of policy making. and the realization of the goals set in the upstream documents in the foreign language education department.

The second topic of interest in the axis of educational principles and policies is the discussion of the English language teaching approach at the school level, which has been considered in almost all the researches examined in this research, and the traditional approach based on the grammar-translation method and the reading-oriented method. , has been criticized. The suggestion of the majority of conducted researches is to move towards communication approaches, especially CLT. Not only English language teachers, but also parents and students, look at Alavi Moghadam (2011), Samii (2011), Safar Navadeh (2013) and the majority of English language experts and experts. Look at Ali Asgari and Dehmardeh about the need to change the traditional approach. They have emphasized communication approaches in the field of foreign language education at the school level.

The investigated research showed that the neighboring and Asian countries have also shown a tendency towards this change of approach and have distanced themselves from the traditional approaches to language teaching, and as Safar Nawadeh (2003) has claimed, a country like Pakistan, which is a neighbor of Iran, in This field has surpassed even Japan and has shown great attention to the teaching of communication skills in the curriculum of its schools. In this context, it is worth mentioning that in the final version of the national curriculum document, the active communication approach of self-confidence is considered as an educational approach, and on this basis, the foreign language curriculum guide compiled in the foreign languages group of the authoring office is also a communication approach. He introduced active self-confidence as an approach to developing a new educational package for foreign languages, including the seventh



grade English language package, and the English for schools series and the Prospect book series, which replaced the previous books, the Right Path to English series, were compiled in the framework of the communication approach. to be

Changing the educational approach from traditional to communication is the most important development in the teaching of foreign languages in the official education system at the level of approach and goals in the time period after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, which was achieved with the publication of 21 prospect books from the six-volume English for schools series. For the seventh and eighth grade, education has reached the stage of practical implementation. Another discussion is related to the first axis of the starting time of education and the hours dedicated to English language lessons in schools, which the results of the researches in question confirm the fact that the majority of researchers evaluate the starting time of the seventh grade with a delay and the dedicated hours They don't consider language lessons to be enough to achieve the desired goals and have suggested that foreign language teaching should start from the last grades of primary school. Regarding the weekly teaching time, researchers such as Safar Navadeh (2008) believe that if the current teaching hours are not possible, it is better to shorten the training sessions and increase the number of weekly teaching sessions.

### **Educational content**

Faruzandeh (2008) believes that a collection like Right path to English is a collection based on the Reading method, which does not pay attention to communication skills, which are the most important features of most foreign language education programs in today's world. This issue is to compare the content of English language teaching books in schools with the books used in open education institutions, and parents and students evaluate the content of textbooks as old and far from the needs of today's world, the expansion of digital media, especially the Internet and mobile phones. And today's human needs have undergone changes, and this is despite the fact that, apart from the pre-university book, basically no name of these new media is mentioned in other language education books. This is despite the fact that approaches such as CALL have overshadowed the teaching of foreign languages and made the use of new equipment and technologies in the English language classroom an undeniable necessity.

Comparing school books with offset books used in free schools that are updated every two to three years is one of the causes of creating a negative attitude towards textbooks; Because the previous English language books for middle school and high school were compiled about a quarter of a century ago and have been far from modern approaches to language education.

The English language books available in the country's educational system lack supporting items and necessities such as flash cards, educational CDs, workbooks and teacher's guides. Of course, it is worth mentioning that some books have teacher's guides, unfortunately, these teacher's guide books are not distributed properly and most language teachers do not use them. The lack of suitable workbooks has led to the entry of different educational aid books with different qualities into schools, which in many cases, in addition to imposing costs on families, the educational performance of these books has also faced many criticisms. Most of these books, rather than workbooks, are final exam preparation books and the teacher only prepares students for the end of the year exam from the beginning of the school year. Educational materials and content of textbooks of different levels have been criticized by researchers in terms of originality, and people such as Dehmardeh (2011) believe that the educational content of current English language books in schools cannot be considered authentic. In the section of sentences used in parts such as new words and even reading comprehension parts, evidence of lack of originality can be seen, and there is no reference to the source of obtaining and adapting the materials used in the mentioned books.

### **Examining English language textbooks in Iranian schools**

During two years of language education in middle school and four years of education in secondary school, students are not able to acquire the necessary skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading completely and comprehensively. "Culture" is the neglected element in teaching English. Culture refers to a set of rules that shape the behavior of a group of people. When people try to learn the foreign language of a group, they are also exposed to the culture of that language. With a glance at the English books written in Iran, it can be seen that the role of culture has been neglected in the planning of English language education. Teaching culture is an integral part of teaching English. Language teachers should provide students with information about the similarities and differences between the culture of the mother tongue and the second language, as many of them are interested in learning about the way of life of the people of that language. Sometimes it is seen that students cannot use their previous knowledge because American culture and values are completely in conflict with their culture. For example, in American culture, animals such as dogs are considered to be man's best friend, while Muslims consider these animals to be dirty and avoid contact with them. EFL students who are going to become ESL learners in the future and live or continue studying in their second language country should learn the culture of the second language well so as not to experience culture shock. To avoid the shortcomings of teaching only one culture in the class, teachers can teach both cultures in the language class. In the field of teaching English, there are countless textbooks in the book market. Many of these books have been written by foreign authors and a few of them by Iranian



authors. Some of these books focus on specific skills. Now one should ask how the language teacher can choose the desired book or books from the multitude of published textbooks. Should he choose a book with beautiful pictures or a book with good grammar or interesting stories? When evaluating textbooks, students' needs, age, interests, and goals should be considered. Language education in Iran has a long history. English as a foreign language is widely taught at different levels in Islamic Iran. According to some authors of language textbooks, most of the foreign books are written with specific goals and are not suitable for the goals of education. The prevailing culture in such books is in conflict with Islamic values. However, after finishing high school, are the students fully prepared to communicate in real environments? Do they consider the emotional and spiritual needs of the students? The contents of educational books should be based on cultural aspects. be social and educational for students. Students should develop critical thinking. Since the concepts of English as a non-native language are far from the mind and are not easy to understand, the content of middle school English language books should be designed in such a way that they include interesting materials and examples, forms And various images should be used for better learning of course material. Textbooks can be effective in developing children's imagination, sense of beauty, and character.

## Conclusion

Teaching English in different countries is facing many problems and Iran is no exception to this rule. Nowadays, English is recognized as an international language, scientists and researchers write their articles and findings in English to present to the world. They leave other countries with any language and culture at their disposal. All countries need to use English language in business, tourism, scientific and cultural fields. Nevertheless, unfortunately in the educational system of our country, Iran, as it should be, learning this language Necessary attention is not given. Teachers are engaged in the teaching-learning process of this lesson for many hours under the roof of the classroom, yet they have not had significant success in this field. Most of the teachers have not yet understood what is really important in teaching and learning in the English language classroom. The relevant teachers For students, learning English is only a subject matter and they do not feel the need for deep and stable learning. However, what is important about learning English is using it in the environment outside of school. In schools, teaching skills The four classes are not done in the same way, and it can be said that some skills are neglected for reasons such as lack of sufficient mastery of teachers or lack of facilities. Lack of sufficient efficiency in schools and the need to learn to teach this language, which is increasing day by day. It is felt that it has caused the increasing presence of people in English language schools. Beyond all these problems, the lack of sufficient opportunity to show the learned skills over time leads to the forgetting of the same little learned material. The unfortunate results of this way of education

of the government has forced changes in the content of books and to some extent in teaching methods, which may be able to reduce these problems a little, but solving all these problems with this method of operation seems far from mind.

Although changes have been made in the compilation of textbooks in recent years, since the textual-grammatical approach is still in the education program, we cannot expect significant results from this change. On the other hand, the content of the books, which contain content and texts for understanding and improving reading skills, are not attractive enough, and the topics that are discussed are not in the field of interests of this generation. Although it is easy to include up-to-date and so-called "youth-friendly" materials that are in accordance with our culture and religious values in the textbooks and teach them a more concrete and practical vocabulary. On the other hand, educational books along with software, educational videos and attached story books in schools, which are compiled based on the culture and values of English-speaking countries, have been more attractive for teenagers, which intentionally or unintentionally have adverse effects, contrary to what is expected. He will have a river on them. Improper goal setting: six years of English language education in most schools in Iran, according to many education and linguistics experts, is just a waste of time, in the circumstances that some students after graduation or even during their studies And in parallel with the educational programs of the school, they learn English in open schools and the number of applicants to attend these schools is gradually increasing. Accordingly, experts relate the weakness of Iranian students in language learning only to the space of formal education. They know and mention the students as people who are interested in learning English that several problems such as the inefficiency of the content of English language textbooks and the lack of teaching hours have reduced their motivation in learning this language. According to one of the theories of linguistics, the peak of language learning The second is between 11 and 14 years old, with the explanation that after 14 years old, a phenomenon called "equalization" occurs in the brain and the power of learning decreases, but this theory does not mean that before and after this period, education and learning It is not done. For this reason, years ago, even in preparatory schools and elementary schools, children were taught English together with books that were designed for the same age. English textbooks in Iran are only based on reading and translation skills, while that even if the discussion is about strengthening these two skills, we have not been successful in these two categories and only a concoction of unnecessary points and useless grammars have been included in English language textbooks. This is while all over the world, the main goal is Teaching foreign languages is communication. Accordingly, the goal of learning English should be to increase conversation skills, which have been neglected in Iranian education. Among skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening, the priority is listening, although these four skills In learning a foreign language, they should be strengthened together and equally, but what is more important than other skills is giving priority to listening. Unfortunately, Iranian students do not have the necessary teaching aids in this field and the possibility to listen to English. It does not exist for most of them, either through audio recording or in language laboratories. The lack of English language teaching hours is another thing that experts criticize and spend three

hours a week to teach this language. They don't know enough, while according to them, the non-standard conditions of education also aggravate the problems caused by this lack of time.

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