



Factors Leading Learners to Fail in End of Year English Test from the Unsuccessful Students Perspective - Erbil Sample

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Abstract

Foreign language acquisition is not easy and continues within a particular program and process. Furthermore, no matter what a foreign language it is, the individual who wants to learn the language faces difficulties. These difficulties are sometimes caused by prejudice against speech and the inability to get rid of habits. Since the individuals living in Iraq are a multinational state, the number of people who know at least two languages is relatively high. However, while people who acquire languages are good at speaking, their writing skills have not developed well enough. Surprisingly, in face-to-face conversations, it was noticed that some prospective students claimed that they learnt English by watching television or playing online games. This research is a qualitative study. In this study, we evaluated the first-year English language learners' thoughts about their failure at the end-of-year test through an unstructured face-to-face interview. Ten students who had 30 weeks of intensive language education in the 2021-2022 academic year in the language preparatory school of Tishk International University were interviewed. In the interview, students were asked one open-ended question. Their responses were recorded, not changed and then scripted as they said. As a result, the three most important reasons affecting students' learning of foreign languages were found. These include: 1- Internet addiction, 2- Failure to do assigned homework 3- Overconfidence.

Keywords: *End of Year Test; Failure; Homework; Internet Addiction; Overconfidence*

Introduction

Knowing a foreign language is necessary to know cultures better globally and benefit from education opportunities abroad (Celik & Yildiz, 2019). Technology developing rapidly in our age is the

close relations of people at the individual and societal levels, so the long-standing need for foreign language learning is more significant than ever (Yildiz, 2021). Foreign language education has become a sector, and serious investments have been made. Now whichever country one lives in today, it is necessary to learn that country's language. In addition, there are course centres and training programs that teach the language of that country. For example, there are dozens of private universities in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and the language of instruction in universities is English. Educators who teach English in the institutions are primarily local, but people prefer to receive language education from foreign nationals. Most students in these private universities who receive foreign language education succeed in the final exams. One of the most important goals of learning a language is to use it well and communicate well. In other words, for a learner to become proficient, he or she must show both accuracy and fluency (Daskan & Yildiz, 2020). Learners try to reach the point where they can use a foreign language like a native speaker. However, a small group fails, although they take a very intensive language preparation course. There are dozens of reasons that prevent students from being successful. Many teachers and educators say that the results of exams and tests are not good enough and do not show how well students speak English. The tests are not prepared well enough, the content and teaching methods are not aligned, there is not enough good equipment, and the classroom environment is not satisfying (Ulker & Yildiz, 2021). The main reasons we have found in the interviews are as follows. 1- Addiction to playing games on the Internet, 2- Not doing homework or not caring about it, 3- Perceptions that the students believe of passing the course successfully at the end of the year.

Internet Gaming Addiction

Computer game addiction is a behavioral addiction with the mandatory use of electronic games, including video games. Game addiction is a technology addiction characterized by inappropriate behaviors related to playing online computer games and video games. It is also examined as a subcategory of internet addiction. Computer games trigger brain changes like drugs or alcohol, leading to feelings of reward and happiness. They arouse the urge to repeat. Gaming addiction is a behavioral addiction because excessive gaming and computer use cause many psychological and physical conditions that harm the person.

Computer games have recently become a part of society and have become a tool through which young people can spend their free time, especially during the Covid-19 case (Celik et al., 2022a). If the computer environment can do what people cannot do, it offers unlimited imagination and control over things. However, it attracts people to become a social environment with opportunities such as making friends in the virtual environment and organizing events. At the same time, there is a direct correlation between playing time and addiction. When computer games strongly impact the daily life of the person concerned, people are considered addicted. Depending on the happiness gained from the game, the desire to play games increases and addiction develops. Game addicts neglect friends, family, school, or work. The symptoms include the person's inability to quit the game, constant thinking about playing games, starting to disrupt their daily work due to playing games, making the primary choice to play games and intertwining the game in real life (Celik et al., 2022b).

Among the harms of games, addiction is deterioration in sleep habits with low academic success, obesity caused by inadequate and unhealthy nutrition, inadequacy in self-care, and a sedentary lifestyle (Bilgin et al., 2022b). Computer game addicts often lose interest in nature and things outside. Staying all the time indoors then leads to physical inactivity, leading to a loss of muscle mass. In computer game addicts, the sleep-wake rhythm is irregular; sleep is constantly postponed. Constantly postponed sleep leads to insomnia, which leads to the weakening of the immune system. Computer game addiction has many psychological harms, such as confusing fantasy and reality, developing antisocial behaviors, losing free thought, and being inclined to violence. Studies show that addiction to video games or the Internet

increases the risk of anxiety disorders, other addictions and depression. An individual trying to learn a psychologically damaged language must learn to control his time on the Internet. As the world's problems have grown more complex, so have the solutions. Numerous concerns necessitate the assistance of a professional in order to find solutions. Guidance is critical in resolving these complex challenges in social life (Bilgin et al., 2022a). Students must understand why the computer has become so important in their life and what they need to change in their real life. Otherwise, it is natural that not only failure in language learning but also individuals fail in every unit of life.

Homework in Education

Assignments are learning activities given by teachers to ensure student development. The homework aims to prepare students for new topics, facilitate learning, review what has been learned, ensure active learning, and contribute to developing students' linguistic, mental, social and physical skills. Homework has a severe impact on the transition of information from short-term memory to long-term memory. When teachers assign balanced homework and students perform it daily, assignments will turn into work that contributes to learning, not unwanted work. The general belief is that an adult learner's maximum concentration for a lesson is only twenty minutes. After that, he/she can soar in mind or not advance mentally. It is an excellent way to follow extracurricular activities to conduct repetitions while doing homework at the beginning, middle, or end of sessions to sustain their focus (Tosun & Yildiz, 2015). According to research, up to 90% of the information that is not repeated within twenty-four hours is forgotten. Since the place of repetition in education is not well understood, the information learned is soon forgotten. Teachers assign students daily assignments to prevent this forgetting. The aim is to do daily repetition and reinforce learning. According to the research related to homework, the quality of the work is more important than the length and number. In other words, the student's effort to do this assignment, the use of various learning techniques, and the ability to control and monitor the work are essential.

For this reason, homework should be checked by the teacher. Assignments that the teacher does not control and does not give feedback to the student are not valuable for the student. Students' satisfaction is provided by the feedback teachers give. When students' expectations are met or exceeded by the university they attend, they report feeling satisfied (Khan & Yildiz, 2020). Therefore, language teachers cannot provide language learning for their students by adhering only to the book, presenting the lesson in a plain narrative and giving a small application in the book to the students as homework. Language teaching can be provided with many practices that the teacher can follow and positive attitudes and behaviors.

Excessive Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is a condition in which a person believes that he can stand on his own feet, that he can succeed unless there is a genuine reason, can handle and solve problems appropriately, and that, typically, he can be at least as skilful and successful as others. However, lack of self-confidence leads to problems such as timidity in school life, inability to take risks, inability to think big, inability to take responsibility, anxiety, stress, inability to express oneself, tension, inability to speak in public, and lack of persuasion ability. On the other hand, being overly confident is a trait that is not right in terms of personality development. Overconfidence is the root cause of most irrational choices (Dogandžić et al., 2020). Overconfidence can be characterized as having a higher level of confidence than what is justified by reality (Moore & Schatz, 2017). The person in this situation engages in behaviours that are not his own and tries to portray himself as a different person as if he is a superior person than he is. They cannot act objectively about events and people; they do not recognize rules and do not share their opinions because they have the right idea about everything; they decide alone without consulting. Overall, the person with

an average confidence level feels a strong sense of motivation, hope and developmentalism, enjoys his work and life, and develops his work in a balanced way.

Methods

In this article, we evaluated the results of a face-to-face interview about the failure of 10 students who were subjected to 30 weeks of an intensive language course and failed the end-of-year test at the language preparatory school of Tishk International University. In the interview, students were asked one open-ended question. Qualitative research (unstructured face-to-face interview) was held with respondents who participated in this research. They were informed that their replies would be recorded and used for research and that their names would be confidential.

Participants

Tishk International University Language Preparatory School had 104 students in the intensive language course of the 2021-2022 academic year. Among those 104 students, ten students failed the end-of-year exam. They were accepted to the departmental studies because they were obliged to study 10 hours of English courses besides the first-grade curriculum. 10 LPS students were interviewed. The number of male students was (6), and the number of female students was (4). Their mean age ranged from (18) to (21).

Findings and Discussion

From the data collected, students who failed the final exam and conditionally accepted to continue to take their first-year departmental subjects were not consent.

We asked one open-ended question to students who studied at the language preparatory school for 30 weeks and failed the final exam: "What do you think about your failure in the end year exam?" the answers from the students were remarkable. Some said, 'I never thought I would fail', 'I attended school so much that I did not expect to fail.' Some said that foreign language education was good, but they did not concentrate because of their computer and game addiction. Below we added the responses given by the students one by one.

- S1: I am still shock. Sir, I came to lessons every day. I studied well. I think, teachers made mistake in checking my exam paper. I write a petition. I am not agree. I must pass. Why like that sir?
- S2: Teacher, Tishk University much difficult. There are many lessons every day. Teachers gives me many homeworks. I cannot find time doing my homeworks... but I am good, I pass next year, I am believe myself.
- S3: Sir. You know myself. I am very well English speak. I love this school and I like teachers. I can speak good English, yes? Still, I can do not know why I did not can pass the exam.
- S4: Dr, you know that I speak well English. I understand everything teachers tell, but I do not study because I cannot find time to study. You know, I addicted with social media, and I play video games 5 hours a day. Next day is problem. No concentration and no homework do.
- S5: I think, I am studied well, but I am not studied good for exams and I am not done homeworks and I am very very shy to speaking. Next year, insha Allah, I going to be very good.
- S6: Wallah mamusta (Upon my word, teacher), your exam not easy. You are very difficult ask on exams. I now why I not pass. Balam(because), I not did homeworks and I not listened your seaking, but insha Allah it will good next year.
- S7: Why I am failure? Because. I play games very much. Tishk education here is number one. I am agree. Next year, insha Allah, I am really very good be.

S8: Sir, I am happy be an Tishk International university student. I am not passed because I did miss school some days. It was the problem, I think. And teachers give homework lots and I cannot did because no time. I go to working after schools and go bed not early.

S9: Mamusta (Sir), English difficult by me. I study but exam difficult also. My speak very well but my write and vocabularies not very well. Next time, Insha Allah good debit (will be).

S10: Sir, I do study every day, do homework, teachers are kind very much but exams not easy. I think I am good student, and I am not go to study 10 hours extra. I can sit one more time for makeup exam, right?

From the replies above, we understand that most students who failed the final exam did not accept their failure in the end-year exam. However, they believe next year will be a successful one for them.

Conclusion

Although we know the practical solutions for acquiring a language, individuals come to the learning environment with differences in knowledge and experience and perceive and learn within the framework of their capacities. For this reason, the idea of one method, one understanding and one activity is never appropriate in the language teaching and learning process. The person who thinks he has made a mistake in using the language and therefore chooses silence has declared himself defeated as a motivation. However, language develops by making mistakes and becoming aware. People can be encouraged to make healthy and responsible decisions through various mechanisms (Yildiz, 2019b). In this case, the environment should be developed to motivate the classroom, mistakes should not be corrected immediately, and students should not be interrupted when talking. Students' exposure to language activities plays a significant role in learning independently. Therefore, students should be provided with environments where they can actively develop their language skills. Within the scope of the opportunity, students should be invited to classroom environments and seminars where they are taught in English (Yildiz, 2016a, 2016b). Teachers should also create environments where they will improve their English in in-class and extracurricular activities (Yildiz, 2015a, 2015b). It should be ensured that the music learners listen to, the film they watch, and the play they act in should be in English. Students should be asked to give seminars in school as homework, and Given tasks should be made obligatory for students to make presentations and students responsibilities throughout the year should be written in curriculum (Yildiz, 2019a). Above all, English teachers should encourage their students to learn and, when necessary, deal one-on-one with students who are considered weak. Learning a language is a process, and any student can come to a point with the support of a teacher. The aftermath occurs with the extra work of the individual. The important thing is that the individual has a goal, sets it for himself, and follows it.

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