

An Investigation into the Problems of Teaching and Learning English in the Isfahan Province High Schools, Iran

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Abstract—This study basically aimed at identifying the problems of teaching and learning English in the high schools of Isfahan, Iran. The data needed for the study were extracted from the standardized questionnaires given to 200 randomly selected students from the high schools of Isfahan and their English teachers constituting the two groups of participants in this study. The instruments used to gather the data were two closed questionnaires, one for the students and the other one for the teachers. The questions included in the questionnaires covered some major problems on the part of the students, teachers, textbooks, teaching methods, and the tests. To analyze the data and specify the problems, the chi-square test was applied. The test was performed to see if the differences among the proportions of the participants who chose different responses to the same questions were significant. Through the statistical analysis of the results, numerous problems regarding the teachers, the learners, the textbooks and the methods were revealed, such as: teachers do not use teaching aids during teaching, school libraries are not well equipped to be of service for the learners of English, classrooms are poor in terms of facilities and physical conditions, the teachers do not teach in English, the English textbooks are not suitable for the students' level of proficiency, and the Ministry of Education does not honor the hard-working teachers, and many more. To remove the problems to the extent possible, some suggestions were provided.

Index Terms—City of Isfahan, high schools, Iran, problems of teaching and learning English

I. INTRODUCTION

Language teaching has a long history in Iran. It dates back to 1851 when the first government-sponsored institution of learning under the name of Dar-ol-Fonun (poly-technique) was established in Tehran (the capital). The foreign language taught at that time was French. Since then, foreign languages have been among the main components of curriculum in Iranian schools. However, the objectives of teaching and learning English have not been satisfactorily met. As a result, almost none of the high school graduates are able to use the English language for the purpose of communication, except for those who learn English in language institutes outside schools. Such a failure in the educational system of the country warrants investigation.

What motivated this research on language learning and teaching is the great value of the English language in Iran. Of course, regarding the vast range of efforts made in relation to the trend of teaching and learning English in Iran, one may think that its objectives have been completely achieved, but it is not true. The experiences of students and teachers and the results of various studies—some to be mentioned later, in this regard have proved that there are many problems in the area of learning and teaching English in Iran.

The abstract nature of learning necessitates constant research in the field to find solutions to questions and difficulties language educators and program developers face. Thus, the constant change and development in language teaching methods is meant to accommodate new findings in the field.

In the last fifteen to twenty years, language teaching in Iran has seen a slow and gradual change from traditional methods, in which deductive learning was stressed and learning of a language was done mainly through teaching and studying of grammar and translation, to more modern methods based on communicative approaches. This move towards the latter methods reflects two points. First, the change in language teaching from traditional methods to communicative ones, and second, the recognition of changes in the kind of proficiency Iranian learners of foreign languages, specifically English, expect to gain, such as a more efficient oral and listening proficiency besides reading comprehension.

Despite the turn from traditional approaches of language learning and teaching, some applied linguists point out research results indicating the efficacy of some practices and techniques of these approaches which boost adolescent and adult learning in SL classroom.

Students' attitudes to procedures and in general to language learning are also crucial. Research in this field of language learning has shown that learners' negative perceptions can be detrimental to the whole learning program (Green, 1993 & Wenden, 1987).

Teachers' perception toward the efficacy of methods and practices employed in teaching a foreign language is yet another significant factor to consider in developing a program. Willingness or unwillingness to experiment with a new method or to use innovations in language teaching is very decisive. Incongruities among teachers' beliefs based on their actual experience with learners and theoretical framework of their teaching can lead to difficulties in teaching which in turn negatively affect learners. (Salomon 1998). Therefore, this study was an attempt to find the reasons for the problems and then to present probable solutions to eradicate them to the extent possible.

II. BACKGROUND

A. The Studies Related to the Teachers' Problems

The conception of a teacher is someone with a great number of decisions to make at every moment of classroom instruction. In some cases, research findings can guide those decisions. In others, research can inform professional judgment, but decisions must be based on experience and intuition rather than knowledge. However, decisions will be aided by the

Gharabaghi (1991) tried to evaluate the plan of the Ministry of Education designed to alleviate the problem of the shortage of teachers in Iran. In this plan, the Ministry of Education tried to solve the problem by lowering the recruitment standards. Gharabaghi presented a historical analysis of the educational system of Iran, with specific references to the number of teachers of English and the preparation of such teachers in Iran. Gharabaghi's study might contribute to a better understanding of the issues related to teacher training and provide clues that may aid in recruiting and training better teachers for the future.

Bahari (1989) attempted to examine the extent to which guidance- and high school teachers in the urban schools of Shiraz in the province of Fars, Iran, were involved in the practice of moonlighting. His study particularly intended to identify the number of teachers who had additional jobs for any reason. It was also intended to find a relationship between the teachers' moonlighting and their needs. Some of the important results were as follows:

1. Iranian teachers were underpaid
2. What made the teachers have a second job was to satisfy their needs.
3. Financial problems and low social status were other reasons that made the teachers get involved in a second job.

Since the end of the Second World War, due to the educational developments, the desire for education and especially higher education has been increasing rapidly in Iran. However, the government has not been able to cope with it due to the shortage of facilities, the most important of which is the shortage of qualified teachers. Teachers of English have not been an exception in this regard.

In 1974-1975 three teacher training centers were established in Zaahedaan, Sanandaj, and Tabriz. In 1975, 25 students were attending day-time English classes and 35 evening classes in Tabriz Teacher-Training Center. All these teacher training centers followed the same curriculum carried out in the teacher training University in Tehran. In all teacher training centers, the students were required to take 140-semester credits in order to finish their studies. Later on, the number of credits and the courses underwent some revisions. At present, the students are required to take 135-semester credits.

At present, in spite of the large number of universities, colleges, teacher-training centers, and all training English teachers, the problem of teacher shortage still remains.

B. The Studies Related To Textbooks Problems

The textbooks used over the years in Iran have passed through various changes in the light of the methods employed. To the best of our knowledge, the first structured textbook taught at the schools of Iran was A Course in English series (the Ministry of Education, 1937). These books were designed on the basis of the Grammar-Translation Method. They were the first government sponsored textbooks published by the Ministry of Education which were taught in high schools before World War I.

To cope with the problem of textbook the Ministry of Education decided upon a six-year plan for designing a new series of English textbooks and a number of experts were commissioned to do the job. The end product of the six-year plan was the *Graded English* series (The Ministry of Education, 1971) which were taught at schools for about 14 years. The *Graded English* series (The Ministry of Education, 1971) was replaced by the *Right Path to English* series (The Ministry of Education, 1985) in 1985. This series was mainly designed on the basis of the principles of the Communicative Teaching Method. The *Right Path to English* series (The Ministry of Education, 1985) is still being used for teaching English in the high schools of Iran.

Amerian (1987) compared the first two books of the *Right Path To English (RPE)* and *Book One* and *Book two* of the *Graded English (GE)*. On the basis of a detailed analysis he concluded that *GE* suffered from the following shortcomings:

- The content was quantitatively inefficient.
- The structural drills were quantitatively insufficient.

In spite of the above shortcomings, GE presented the pronunciations of the words in an effective way.

Eftekhary (1990) examined the effectiveness of the Graded English textbooks taught in Iran after the Islamic Revolution. These textbooks were revised to replace western-oriented contents with Islamic materials. The researcher had attempted to examine various factors such as the English curriculum guidelines, teachers' proficiency in English, teachers' and textbook writers' perception of the goals of the English curriculum and the test items given to the students. He concluded that the revised textbooks did not develop in the learners the ability to use the language in a real situation. In his view, these textbooks were not in conformity with the normal English patterns and language use.

C. The Studies Related To Methods and Evaluation

Mahmoodi (1990), an official in the "Curriculum and English Textbook Designing Department" of the Ministry of Education trying to present a brief account of English language teaching and learning in Iran, mentioned the following points:

1. In spite the failure of the Grammar-Translation Method, it is still used at the schools.
2. Grammar rules are explained to the students in details, but they are not expected to use them in real situations i.e., the usage is the focus of the attention, but the use of the rules is not emphasized.
3. Since grammar constituted the bulk of the tests, teachers had to emphasize grammar.

Asai (1959), briefly reviewed some of the problems of teaching and learning English in the schools of Iran. The problems that he mentioned were mostly attributed to the inappropriate methodology employed by the teachers of English. Among the problems that he mentioned was the fact that most of the students had special notebooks for writing down the Persian meanings of the English words in. this wrong habit was encouraged by the teachers. In addition, the students transcribed the English words using Persian orthography. As a result, they could not learn the correct pronunciation of the words.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is now almost common knowledge that formal education of English in public schools in Iran has failed to achieve most of its objectives. The English programs at high schools do not create motivation in students and seldom arouse their interest. Therefore, one can claim that the objectives of teaching and learning English have not even been approximated, and there are many problems in this area in Iran.

This study is an attempt to offer some guidelines in solving some of the existing problems in this respect, and also seeks answers to the following questions:

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do the economic, social, and individual status of the English teachers influence their teaching (from the perspectives of Iranian high school L2 learners and teachers)?
2. Do the economic, familial, and mental status of the L2 learners affect their learning English (from the perspectives of Iranian high school L2 learners and teachers)?
3. Is there a lack of suitable, consistent, and efficient method used by the Iranian high school English teachers?
4. Are inconsistency with the students' level of proficiency in English, and inappropriate presentation of the materials the main deficiencies of the Iranian high school English textbooks?

V. METHOD

A. Participants

This study was conducted with two groups of participants. The first group of participants consisted of 200 male and female high school students. All the participants were randomly selected out of twenty high schools from all five regions in the city of Isfahan. Out of twenty high schools selected, ten were female and the other ten were male high schools. These students were first, second, and third grades in high school with different English proficiency level.

The second group of participants consisted of 30 male and female English teachers from the same high schools. Their ages ranged from 30 to 45, and they all spoke Farsi.

B. Materials

In this study, the instrumentation of data collection consisted of two different questionnaires. The first one was the students' questionnaire containing 43 items, each representing a variable. The second one was the teachers' questionnaire with 51 items. To obtain the questionnaires, the researcher originally used the instruments which were used in similar research over 15 years ago with the exceptions of making noticeable amount of changes and modifications by the researcher. With the help and expertise of an experienced panel of experts first the items of the questionnaires changed from yes/no to a Lickert scale in which there are five answers to an item. Then the numbers of the items of each questionnaire increased from 15 to 51 and 15 to 43 for the teachers and the students respectively. These changes and modifications made the new questionnaires to have more than twenty new categories which resulted in new variables and consequently new areas of concerns that have not been utilized before.

As mentioned above, after several modifications and changes of the items and format of the questionnaires, two questionnaires, one for the teachers and one for the students, based on Lickert scale were approved by the panel of experts to be utilized. In this study, the validity of the questionnaires was also determined by the panel of experts.

The reliability of the questionnaires was specified to be 0.75, using Cronbach Alpha through a pilot study with twenty randomly selected high school students and five English teachers at the high schools from which the students were selected.

C. Procedures

The pilot study was carried out on twenty high school boys and girls (ten boys and ten girls) who were randomly selected from four schools (regions 1 and 3), and then the study was performed on five English teachers from the same high schools.

After the pilot study was completed, it was reviewed and two modifications were made on the questionnaires: first, the items which had more than one variable were re-written separately on the questionnaires with only one variable-this resulted for the numbers of items to be increased, second, all the items of both questionnaires were modified and inserted in a Table-like questionnaire instead of a regular sheet of paper with items written on them. After that, the questionnaires based on Lickert scale were approved to be utilized on the actual study with 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls) from all five regions in the city of Isfahan, and 30 teachers (15 males and 15 females) from the same schools.

The actual study was performed using the new and approved questionnaires based on the Lickert scale. Due to the restrictions and limitations it took three days to complete all the questionnaires. At the time of answering the questions, the researcher or his assistant for the girls' high schools, the school principal, and the English teacher were present. All ambiguities by the students were responded by the researcher at the time of answering the questionnaires.

After completing all the questionnaires by the students and the teachers, the raw data were ready to be statistically analyzed.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

Once the research data have been collected with the aid of different types of data collection procedures, the next phase of the research was to analyze those data. The goal of this part is three fold: first reporting the percentages of the students' and the teachers' responses given to the items of the questions; second, determining if the percentages obtained are significant or not; and third, determining if the responses given to the items of the questions indicate any problems concerning teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

The students' questionnaire contained 43 questions each representing a variable. It is worth mentioning that among the 43 variables just 17 appeared to be problematic. The problems are as follows:

TABLE 1:
RESULTS OF THE PROBLEMS

The Education of the Student's Father 24.6% of the students' fathers have below secondary level education, 4.5% illiterate, and 49.7% of the students' fathers have secondary education, 15.6% have associate degrees and Just 5.5% of the fathers have B.A and above degrees. $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 9.49 O.V.=136.8% D.F.= 4
The Education of the Students' Mothers 33.2% of the students mothers' have below secondary education, 46.2% have completed the secondary education, and 13.6% have a associate degrees. Only 2.5% of them have accomplished B.A and above degrees. In other words, most of the students' mothers do not have higher education. $P=0<0.05$ C.V= 9.49 O.V.=144.09% D.F.= 4
Sources for Learning English Table 4.4: Results of Sources for Learning English 46.2% of the students use the high school classes as the only source for learning English, and 48.5% of the students do not use the English institutes as well as the high school classes for learning English. $P=0<0.05$ Critical value =7.81 O.V.= 57.16 (T4.3), 71.55(T4.4) D.F.= 3
whether a pre-test has been given or not 77% of the students stated that their teachers had not given them pre-tests at the beginning of the school year. $P=0<0.05$ critical value = 9.49 O.V.=156.9 D.F.= 4
Teachers' Creativity $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 9.49 O.V.=29.9 D.F.= 4 33.5% of the teachers show some creativity in their teaching procedure.
A friendly relationship among the Students and their English Teachers 35.4% of the teachers have satisfying friendly relation with their students. $P=0<0.05$ C.V=9.49 O.V.=58.6 D.F.=4
Using Educational aids by the English Teachers 64.3% of the students claimed that their English teachers do not use any educational aids. $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 9.49 O.V.=254.79 D.F.= 4
Problems of the English Textbooks $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 9.49 89.5% of the students claim that their English text books are being bulky. O.V.= 604.6 D.F.= 4
Short comings of the English Textbooks $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 9.49 O.V.=316.12 93% of the students believe that their English textbooks explain a limited number of the new words. D.F.= 4
Short comings of the English Textbooks $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 9.49 O.V.=316.12 84.5% of them believe that their English textbooks do not have enough drill exercises. D.F.= 4
Short comings of the English Textbooks 83.4% of the students indicated that their English textbooks do not contain a clear understanding of grammatical points. $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 9.49 O.V.= 316.12 D.F.= 4
Short comings of the English Textbooks $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 9.49 D.F.= 4 77% believe that in their English textbooks there is not any mention of poems and/or comics. O.V.= 316.12
Short comings of the English Textbooks $P=0<0.05$ C.V= 9.49 O.V.=316.12 D.F.= 4 80% of the students pointed out that in their English textbooks the exercises are not in appropriate places.
The Number of Students in a class $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 7.81 42% of the students indicated that their classes contain more than 40 students. O.V.=174.73 D.F.= 3
Whether a library is available as school $P=0<0.05$, C.V= 9.49, O.V.=567.25, D.F.= 4 87% of the students indicated that they are unable to use the sources at their school library to learn English.
The students' parents' monthly income $P=0<0.05$ Critical value = 9.49 42.3% of the students' family income is between 200,000 and 500,000. Tomans. O.V.=110.68 D.F.= 4 33% of their income is between 500,000 and 1,000,000. Tomans.

The teachers' questionnaire consists of 51 questions each representing a variable. Like the students' responses, a Chi-square (χ^2) test was run for each variable as well as an ANOVA (analysis of variance). The variables whose obtained χ^2 values (P values above), are not significant or despite being significant do not indicate any problems are not discussed here.

The procedure in this section is the same as that of the previous one; that is, in order to specify the problems of teaching and learning English from the teachers' points of view, each of the above variables are put into the form of a null hypothesis (H_0). Then the results of the Chi-square test run for each variable are presented in a table and according to the results, problems are identified. It is worth mentioning here that among these 51 variables just 33 were proved as problems which are as follows:

TABLE 2:
RESULTS OF THE PROBLEMS

Results of Teachers Satisfaction with their job 60% of the teachers are not content with their jobs at the Ministry of Education.
Results of Improving the listening skill through various channels 100% of the teachers try to improve their listening skill through some of the mentioned channels.
Results of Friendly relationship among teachers and their students 70% of the teachers have friendly relationship with their students.
Results of the skills mostly emphasized by the English teachers The skills mostly emphasized by the English teachers are: Speaking, 80%, and Reading 60%. 80% of the English teachers indicated their disagreements to put emphasis on listening and writing.
Results of the effect of using different teaching methods by different teachers on the students' learning 60% of teachers stated that using different teaching methods has a negative influence on the students' learning.

Results of whether the inconsistency in using British and American English by different teachers is problematic	75% of the English teachers believe that the inconsistency in using British and American English by different teachers is problematic.
Results of whether only the English textbooks are taught	60% of the English teachers tend to use other sources in teaching where as only 40% of the English teachers only use the English textbooks in classes.
Results of whether a pre-test is given to the students	60% of the English teachers do not give a pre-test to their students.
Results of the allocation of some time to solve the students' problems in learning English	45% of the teachers allocate no time to solve the students' problems related to their learning English.
Results of whether the teachers' manual is available or not	70% of the teachers claimed that the teachers' manual is not available.
Results of whether the teachers' manual will be useful	70% of the English teachers agree that the teachers' manual will be useful.
Results of whether the lack of existence of teachers' manual will have a negative effect on teaching procedure.	70% of the English teachers indicated that the lack of existence of teachers' manual will have negative effect on teaching procedure.
Results of Lesson plans	70% of the English teachers use lesson plans.
Results of using the students' mother tongue in class	90% of the English teachers use Farsi to a great extent (more than two thirds).
Results of the necessity of having a second job	95% of the teachers stated that the salary of the teachers is not sufficient and that they need a second job.
Results of the need for a group of English professors to solve the teachers' problems in teaching	85% of the English teachers stated that they feel a need for a group of experts on English to solve their problems in teaching.
Results of the Effect of the Students' family help to solve their problems with English	90% of the English teachers stated that the students' family help has a positive influence on the learning of the students.
Results of the appropriateness of 1st grade of guidance school for starting the learning of English	95% of the teachers believe that first grade of guidance school is not appropriate for starting the learning of English.
Results of Elementary school or before will be the appropriate time to start learning of English	100% of the English teachers indicated that the appropriate time to start learning English will be the elementary school or before.
Results of the effects of students' economic status on their learning of English	50% of teachers believe that there is a direct relationship between the students' economic status and their learning of English. In other words, those who have a better financial status may learn the English language better than those who have a poor economic status.
Results of Grading of the English textbooks' materials from easy to difficult	40% of the teachers indicated that the materials in the English textbooks do not proceed from easy to difficult. That is, the students may come across more difficult materials before the easier ones.
Results of whether the drills of English textbooks are presented in a mechanical, meaningful, and communicative order	90% of the English teachers believe that the drills of English textbooks are not presented in a mechanical, meaningful, and communicative order
Results of Deficiency in obtaining the translations of the new words	40% of the English teachers indicated that there is a deficiency in obtaining the translations of the new words in English textbooks.
Results of whether the English textbooks are of good quality in terms of illustrations, pictures, colors, etc.	85% of the teachers of English believe that the English textbooks do not enjoy good quality in terms of illustrations, pictures, and colors.
Results of the availability of educational aids at schools	75% of the English teachers stated that the educational aids are not available at the high schools they are teaching.
Results of Administering oral examinations in high schools	90% of the English teachers claim that it is not possible to administer oral examinations with regard to high-school facilities and circumstance (such as space, audio-visual aids, etc.), despite the fact that the students are required to pass an oral examination as one of their school subjects.
Results of Factors causing problems in doing oral drills and administering oral examinations	A great majority of the teachers believe that all the four types of factors-shortage of time (90%), lack of facilities (100%), over sized classes (75%), and not enough students or teachers' interests (85%), cause problems in doing oral drills and administering oral examinations.
Results of the quality of classrooms in terms of size ,light,color, ...	65% of the teachers declared that the classrooms in which they are teaching are not of a good quality in terms of size, light, color, etc.
Results of the average number of students in classes	90% of the teachers indicated that their English classes comprise of more than 30 students, which is a very high number for a language class.
Results of consideration of the students' individual differences by the educational system	All the English teachers agreed on the fact that "the educational system does not consider the individual differences among the students in terms of their levels of language proficiency". In other words, the students with different levels of language proficiency are studying in same class and are taught the same materials.
Results of the possibility of doing oral drills	Most of the English teachers have confessed that they do not pay any attention to oral drills.
Results of Sufficiency of the teachers' salary	None of the English teachers believe in the sufficiency of their salary.
Results of whether the educational systems gives different values to different teaching qualities	None of the English teachers believe that educational system pays attention to different teaching qualities.
Results of whether the English textbooks are appropriate for the students' mental abilities	95% of the teachers believe that the English textbooks have not been designed in conformity with the students' level of mental abilities.
Results of the authenticity of the English textbooks	95% of the English teachers believe that materials in the English textbooks are not authentic.
Results of the sufficiency of the English class time	All English teachers expressed that the English class time is not sufficient at all.
Results of whether the English tests are in conformity with the goals of teaching English set by the ministry of education	Majority of the teachers agreed that the English tests are not in conformity with the goals of teaching English set by the ministry of educations.

TABLE 3:

THE PROBABLE EFFECTS OF SOME OF THE PROBLEMS SPECIFIED FROM THE STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' RESPONSES ON EACH OTHER

The effect of the “students’ fathers’ education” on “the importance given by the family to the learning of English”	The results indicate that an increase in the students’ fathers’ education results in an increase in the importance given to the learning of English by the students’ family.
The effect of “the students’ fathers’ education” on “the students’ family help to solve the students’ problems in learning English”	The findings reported imply that the students’ fathers’ level of education has a strong effect on the amount of help the students enjoy for solving their problems in learning English.
The effect of “the students’ fathers’ education” on “the students’ intention to continue their education at university”	The statistical results indicate that the fathers’ education has a major effect on their studies at university.
The effect of “the students’ mothers’ education” on “the importance given to learning English by the students’ family”	According to the results the more educated the mothers, the more importance they give to the learning of English by their children.
The effect of “the students’ mothers’ education” on “the students’ intention to continue their studies at university”	According to the results, a very high percentage of the students (70.7%, 65.4%, and 100% respectively) whose mothers have high school education, associate, BA or higher education, are eager to continue their studies at university.
The effect of the “teachers’ creativity” on “using educational aids”	As the data indicates, most of the teachers who are more creative in their teaching process use more educational aids.
The relationship between “the students’ family Monthly income” and “the students’ access to the sources for learning English”	The results seem to support this claim that an increase in the students’ family monthly income results in an increase in the number of sources they use. The results indicates that a large percentage of the students whose family monthly income is less than 200,000 tomans, use the high school classes as the only source for learning English, and a very slight percentage of them use other sources in addition to their high school classes.
The effect of “the teachers’ satisfaction with their job” on “the friendly relationship between teachers and students”	As the results indicate, there is a strong interaction between these two variables. In other words, table 4.62 leads us to this fact that the teachers who are more content with their jobs create more friendly relations with their students.
The effect of “the teachers’ satisfaction with their job” and “allocating some time for solving the students’ problems”	Most of the teachers who are content with their job allocate some time for solving their students’ problems in learning English.
The effect of “the friendly relationship between teachers and students” on “allocating some time for solving the students’ problems”	All the teachers who have friendly relations with their students surly allocate some time for solving their students’ problems. In other words, all the teachers who allocate some time for solving their students’ problems surly have friendly relations with their students.
The effect of “the average number of students in a class” on “using only the English textbooks by teachers”	As the results indicates, in the classes with more than 40 students, no teacher uses English books other than the school textbooks. However, 62% of the teachers who say that their classes have less than 30 students use other sources in addition to the school textbooks.
The interaction between “administering pre-tests” and “the average number of students in a class”	According to the results it can be seen that no pre-test is administered in the classes with more than 40 students. On the other hand, in 78% of the classes with fewer than 30 students pre-tests are given to the students. Thus, there is a major interaction between these two variables.
The effect of “the average number of students in a class” on “doing oral drills”	“The average number of students in a class” has a great effect on “doing oral drills”.
The effect of “doing oral drills” and “using educational aids” on each other	The results clearly show that all the teachers who are interested in doing oral drills, use educational aids for the betterment of the students’ learning English

ANOVA TABLES

The effect of “teacher’s economic status” on the “quality of their teaching”	$P=0.09>0.05$, which means that the economic status of the teachers has no effect on the quality of their teaching. Of course, this may be due to the fact that all the teachers who participated in this study were dissatisfied with their salary. In other words, they have similar economic status.
The effect of “teacher’s individual status” on the “quality of their teaching”	$P = 0.032 < 0.05$. Therefore, the individual status of the teachers will have an effect on the quality of their teaching.
The effect of “teacher’s social status” on the “quality of their teaching”	$P = 0.220 > 0.05$. Therefore, the individual status of the teachers has no effect on the quality of their teaching.
The effect of “L2 learner’s economic status” on the “amount of their learning”	$P = 0 < 0.05$. Therefore, the economic status of the L2 learners will have an effect on their learning. Using Tukey’s approach, the sources of differences were studied and the following results were obtained: The amount and level of learning of those L2 learners with a family income between 1,000,000 and 2,000,000 Tomans were higher than the L2 learners with a family income of less than 200,000, between 200,000 and 500,000, and between 500,000 and 1,000,000
The effect of “the fathers’ education of the L2 learners on their learning”	$P = 0 < 0.05$. Therefore, the fathers’ education of the L2 learners will have an effect on their learning. Using Tukey’s approach, the sources of differences were studied and the following results were obtained: The amount and level of learning of the L2 learners whose fathers’ education was Associate, Bachelor, or Higher Degrees were higher than those L2 learners whose fathers had elementary education or, they were even literate.
The effect of “the mothers’ education of the L2 learners on their learning”	$P = 0 < 0.05$. Therefore, the mothers’ education of the L2 learners will have an effect on their learning. Using Tukey’s approach, the sources of differences were studied and the following results were obtained: The amount and level of learning of the L2 learners whose mothers’ education was High School Diploma, Bachelor, or Higher Degrees were higher than those L2 learners whose mothers had elementary education or, they were literate.
The effect of “L2 learner’s mental status” on their learning”	$P = 0.001 < 0.05$. Therefore, the mental status of the L2 learners will have an effect on their learning. In other words, the students who had motivations for learning English, continuing education, and going abroad had higher amount and level of learning.

VII. DISCUSSION

A. Some of Problems Specified from the Students’ Responses and the Effects of them on Each Other

One may claim that there is no obvious relation between the parents’ education and the students’ English learning because there are many students with good command of English whose fathers or mothers do not have university degrees. But, if one considers the great effect of the students’ fathers’ and mothers’ education on some other variables as “the importance given by the family to the students’ learning of English”, “the family’s help in solving the students’ problems” and the students’ intention to continue their studies at university”, one can come to this result that the students’ parents’ education plays a great role in the educational status of the students. Fathers and mothers with university degrees provide their children with suitable economic, cultural, and mental background which is of great importance in the educational progress of the students from childhood to adulthood.

Regarding the insufficient income of the students’ parents, There is no need to explain the reasons why one’s economic status may influence his/her learning of every branch of sciences especially a foreign language. Generally speaking, the desirable economic status may provide the students with better and more effective access to the high-quality schools, better teachers, better and more sources for learning. But, in this study attention is paid to the relationship between the economic status of the students and their access to the different sources for learning English. As the results indicate, the insufficient income of the students’ parents can influence the students’ access to different sources for learning English. In other words, the students with better economic status enjoy more sources for learning English. For example, according to the data given by the students, for about three fourth of the students whose parents’ income is less than 200,000 Tomans a month, high school classes serve as the only source for learning English, but a great majority of the students with desirable economic status enjoy additional sources as language institutes, tapes, films and books.

The teachers’ lack of creativity is another problem which was specified from the students’ responses. This problem may affect other aspects of the teaching methodology. For instance, as the data analysis indicates, using educational aids is under the effect of the teachers’ creativity. In other words, the more creative teachers use more educational aids. Of course, this fact cannot be considered independently of other problems. Perhaps insufficient facilities at schools, insufficient class time and the teachers’ dissatisfaction with their jobs in the Ministry of Education lead to the teachers’ lack of creativity, and little use of educational aids as well.

Large number of students in each class certainly is another problem. over-crowding hinders effective learning and effective teaching because the existing limited opportunities including educational aids, classroom size and teachers’ attention have to be divided among a large number of students. In other words, students do not have adequate exposure to English. The effect of this problem - - the large number of students in a class - - on two other problems supports the above-mentioned statements. One of the mentioned problems is that no pre-test is given to the students at the beginning of the school year, as discussed earlier. The second problem whose relationship with the large number of the students in a class was found as significant is “doing oral drills”. Obviously a second/foreign language demands a great deal of oral

drills on the part of teachers and the learners. Students of a new language will not learn to use the language fluently merely by reading and writing. Teachers need to give their students adequate opportunities to practice listening and speaking. One effective means for practicing can be oral drills. However, the large number of students in each class limits the students' opportunities to do oral drills because practice demands sufficient time and energy, which stands against the over-crowded classes and so on.

B. Some Problems Specified from the Teachers' Responses and the Effects of them on Each Other

Teachers' dissatisfaction with their jobs may be mainly due to the insufficient salary, and / or due to this fact that the educational system does not give different values to the different teaching qualities. In other words, as the data shows teachers believe that for the existing educational system an experienced and well-skilled teacher is equal with a poor teacher. The reason whatever is, this problem - - the teachers' dissatisfaction with their job - - may deeply affect the methodology of teaching on the part of teachers and consequently language learning on the part of learners, as well. The effect of this problem on the lack of friendly relationship between teachers and their students, and allocating some time for solving the students' problems with learning English are the examples which lend themselves well to support the importance of teachers' dissatisfaction with their job.

The deficiencies of English textbooks such as English textbooks drills are not presented in a mechanical, meaningful and then communicative order; their materials are not graded from easy to difficult; the textbooks are not of good quality in terms of illustrations, pictures, and colors; they are not properly designed for the mental abilities of students; and finally, English textbooks are not authentic.

VIII. SOLUTIONS

It is logical that there is a solution for every problem, and the mentioned problems are not exceptions. In this part, the researcher tries to put forward some solutions hopefully to eradicate the problems of teaching and learning English in the Isfahan high schools. Some of these solutions are proposed to the Ministry of Education, some to the teachers, and the others to textbook writers.

A. Some Proposals to the Ministry of Education

- The schools should be well equipped with proper educational aids.
- The schools should be provided with libraries containing useful and interesting English books.
- The physical conditions of the classrooms should be improved in terms of light, color, size.
- The average number of students in a class should be lowered so that the students can enjoy the existing opportunities to a desirable extent.
- The time allocated to teaching English should be increased.
- The schools should be provided with some facilities which can simplify the administration of oral examinations.
- A group of experts is needed in the Ministry of Education for solving the problems teachers face in teaching and evaluation.
- The teachers should be supplied with Teachers' Manuals.
- The teachers' salary should be increased to solve their financial problems and to satisfy their needs.
- And finally, the Ministry of Education should give different values to different teaching qualities to encourage the teachers to increase the quality of their teaching.

B. Some Proposals to the Teachers

- Teachers should know that using educational aids can facilitate the process of teaching and learning English.
- It has been proved that giving pre-tests makes the teachers to be familiar with the levels of the students' proficiency at the beginning of the school year.
- Obviously, it is better for the teachers to use the Teachers' Manuals and lesson plans.
- Teaching books other than the textbooks can motivate the students to learn English better and more effectively.
- Teachers should be consistent in using British or American English pronunciation.
- It is better for the teachers to develop friendly relationships with the students so that the students feel at ease in the class and consequently learn the lessons more effectively.
- Teachers should emphasize all the four skills - - listening, speaking, reading and writing - - to arrive at a desirable status.
- The teachers should develop their listening skill through various channels such as the English speaking radios, television, etc

C. Some Proposals to the Textbook-Writers

- Textbook-writers should pay more attention to the quality of the books in terms of illustrations, pictures, colors,
- The English textbooks should be appropriate for the mental abilities of the students. etc.
- The materials included in the English textbooks should be graded from easy to difficult.
- The textbooks drills should be graded from mechanical to meaningful to communicative.

■ The English text books suffer from some major problems and shortcomings, as the lack of relationship among the different materials, lack of explanation of new words, lack of interesting materials as short stories, poems, songs, and jokes, and lack of authenticity. The textbook writers should take all the above-mentioned points into consideration and remove the problems to the extent possible.

IX. CONCLUSION

This research was basically carried out to discover the existing problems in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in the high schools of Isfahan, Iran. The study showed that the English teachers referred to 33 problems and the students to 17. All the problems and their effects on each other were discussed and illustrated in details in the preceding sections.

Among the above students' problems, there are some which can affect some other ones; they are as follows:

■ The students' fathers' education affects the importance given to the learning of English by the family, the students' family help solving the students' problems in learning English, and the students' intention to continue their studies at university.

■ The students' mothers' education affects the importance given to the learning of English by the family, and the students' intention to continue their studies at university.

■ The teachers' creativity affects the use of educational aids by the teachers.

■ The students' family income affects the students' access to different source of learning English.

The problems discovered from the teachers' responses are 33, among the problems there are some which can affect other ones, they are as follows:

■ Teachers' satisfaction with their jobs in the Ministry of Education affects the teachers' friendly relationship with their students, and their intention to allocate some time for solving the students' problems in learning English.

■ Teachers' friendly relationship with their students affects their intention to allocate time for solving the students' problems in learning English.

■ The average number of students in a class affects firstly the teaching of only the English textbooks and not any other English books, secondly, administering a pre-test and thirdly doing oral drills. Doing oral drills is also relevant to using educational aids by the teachers

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