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Ազգանուն, անուն, գիտական աստիճան, կոչում

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Introduction

My research work's theme is Teaching/learning challenges in EFL classes.

It is about various challenges that the teachers are faced to during the teaching process.

It is important for being aware of them in order to succeed in the process of teaching.

The teaching challenges are always being changed as the approaches to the educational system and to the system of values are being rapidly changed too.

My aim is to represent the possible challenges in teaching, particularly in English, in order to achieve the necessary goals for developing various skills among the learners.

CHAPTER ONE

The Importance of Knowing Teaching Challenges

Our life moves forward, we achieve some goals, move on with our career, overcome barriers, sometimes fail which teaches us to get the ability to deal with every hardship we meet.

There are challenges everywhere: in every sphere, in every step of our life. Challenges may be socio-economic and individual. Socio-economic challenges include high unemployment, poverty, social inequality and limited access to public services.

Social and economic factors such as income, education, employment, community safety and social supports can deeply affect how well and how long we live.

Individual challenges, I think, are closely connected with the previous one. They may be: health crisis, workplace issues, emptiness, friendship issues, inner peace, mental health, etc

What is the purpose of education? What is the purpose of learning languages, especially English?

These are questions that have no clear answers. Pupils think that they like to learn new things, teachers think that it is a job and the parents think their children can pass the exams, get a certificate and get a necessary job. Developing language skills, as well as the process of learning English, are both very important. Some of the main economic, cultural, social and psychological profits of learning and needing languages are:

- a) helping people to incorporate in different environments and unite
- b) helping people to overcome the hardships, for example by providing the mental and physical space needed to process in
- c) enabling people to pass exams and get certification
- d) encouraging people to access learning and training chances

One of the challenges while teaching English is creating a safe classroom. It can be understood differently. The teacher should recognize and realize all the factors (e.g. social, ethnic, cultural) which influence why the learners may not feel safe. A "safe space" is somewhere where the pupils feel they can speak and act freely, without being criticized unfairly by the teacher or their classmates.

At the first sight it may be not so urgent but the pupils feel safer when the teacher knows their names. It is very motivating if the teacher knows who they are, so they may feel proud or valued. If the class is large, the pupils may wear badges with their names or simply write their names on pieces of paper and put them on their desks.

Some pupils may speak, their mother tongues (national languages) during the English lessons. The teacher must be more tolerant. From time to time the teacher could also speak Armenian to make the classroom feel much safer place for them.

When the teacher is angry annoyed or sounds bored, the school children feel nervous or frightened. Even the teacher's marching up and down the class, pointing, clicking fingers at students can influence the pupils. The teacher must pay attention not what to say in class, but how to say. The teacher should also take the time to be friendly and be interested in her pupils' lives. During the intervals the teacher should ask some questions about their timetable or schedule. When the teacher shows pure interest in her pupils, they may trust her more and see her as a person as well as a teacher. The teacher can share more about her own life by asking questions like: What do you think I like doing my free time? What do you think is my favourite music? etc.

While teaching the teacher should create an inclusive classroom. Economic and social pressure means that in challenging circumstances, classrooms are seldom inclusive, actually they are anti-inclusive. Inclusivity must be considered from multiple points: e.g.the learners' physical disability, gender, racial and religious identity.

An inclusive classroom is one in which all the learners have an opportunity to take part equally and to the best of their abilities. The learners recognize and accept each other as equal partners in learning. Inclusivity means that no student or schoolchild is discriminated against their age, level of disability, gender, ethnicity, race or religion.

An inclusive classroom provides social and emotional benefits for all learners. This can have a positive influence on their learning process. Schoolchildren with physical disabilities are another challenge in the teaching process.

The teacher should encourage deaf or hard-of-hearing pupils to sit where the accustics are best, should speak loudly and clearly and direct the voice towards them.

While with poor eyesight pupils the teacher should ensure they sit near the front so they are able to see the blackboard. The teacher must write in large letters on the board and say aloud everything that she writes on the blackboard.

Another challenge in teaching English is making the teaching student-focused. A very common teaching approach is "chalk and talk", or "sit and listen", where the learners are not active. In this case, the teacher monopolizes the classroom, uses the blackboard as the main teaching aid. The schoolchildren sit and listen silently, only when they are supposed to answer the questions, they speak individually or in chorus.

Many teachers, especially those who lack experience or confidence, feel more secure when they can control what is happening. They can worry that

allowing the pupils to work together or giving them more responsibility, could result in chaos.

However, there are many reasons why student-focused approach is better and more effective. It maximizes the chances for English practice, engages the pupils more deeply, creates more trust and a better relationship between the teacher and the pupils.

The teacher must allow the pupils to have the opportunity to practice. It is possible when the pupils work together on pairs on a grammar practice exercise, when the teacher decentralizes the learning and gives them more responsibility through more group work. When teaching words for vegetables and fruit, the teacher brings in actual oranges, apples, onions, potatoes, whatever is possible. This is called that the teacher uses realia(real-life objects). She may ask the pupils to bring them to do a "show and tell" activity. The teacher may ask " open questions" as well as "closed questions". This will motivate the pupils to understand their language level. The teachers sometimes complain that the schoolchildren don't like group work. It isn't so. They are bored when there is poor monitoring and support or the teacher gives unclear constructions. Group work helps the pupils to develop team-working and collaboration skills.

A mingle activity is a way for pupils to speak to lots of different pupils, especially children who they might not work with. They go round the group and ask questions.

A share activity is good for children to see what other groups have done. The groups work on large piece of paper. When the activity is over, one or two members of each group stay in their place and hold their paper up. The other pupils circulate and look at what all the other groups have done. They can ask questions if they want. A doughnut or onion ring activity is useful for when the teacher wants the pupils to repeat a communicative activity with other partners in a structured way. They form a circle, facing outwards. The other half of the group faces them in a bigger circle. Each pair speaks for a short time, the outer circle then moves round one place, clockwise.

It is very important when the teacher sees his pupils not just a "class", but as a group of individuals. The teacher must take into consideration the following five points:

- a)Exhaustion (the pupils may have got up early to do homework or had a long trip to get to school).
- b) Depressions (the pupils may have mental health issues). In this case the teacher must consult the parents, and help them get support.

- c) Stress or anxiety (the pupils were hit by the teacher or something stressful is happening at home). In this case the teacher must consult a specialist, avoid topics which may be triggers and create a peaceful classroom atmosphere.
- d) Hunger (the pupils may not have eaten a proper breakfast or lunch). This is possible during religious or cultural festivals.

Planning lessons of English is another important thing in the process of teaching.

Where do you start? How do you choose a topic? Which order do you do the tasks in? What if you run out of time? What if you run out of materials? So many things to think about! Jo Budden

Planning a lesson can be very effecient for pupils and the teacher. Planning lessons can help you be flexible when unexpected things happen or when the teacher understands that he has too much or too little material for a lesson. Planning should help the teacher teach better. It should be done not for a single lesson but for a series of lessons.

While speaking about challenges in teaching, I would like to mention the lack of learning progress. It is demotivating for both the pupils and the teacher if they feel they aren't making any progress and aren't learning anything. This happens when the pupils have low educational expectation, never receive feedback or have repeatedly performed poorly in assessment.

As a solution to this the teacher should plan the lesson:(What will the pupils know at the end of the lesson? What will the pupils be able to do at the end of the lesson which they couldn't do at the start?) The teacher should pay much attention to the point which is successful and evaluate the learners.

During the lesson, the pupils can get confused when a lesson is not clearly staged or when the contents are not given in a logical order.

e.g. if they read a text on a topic which they have no background knowledge or where they don't know grammatical structures used. It may occur because of the way the teacher has or hasn't organized the lesson. The good teacher will move from the familiar to the unfamiliar and from the simple to the more complicated. In face the lesson will move from:

- a) the known to the unknown
- b)oral to written

- c) using receptive skills to using productive skills
- d) controlled practice to free practice

Every child in every classroom brings a history to school. Sarah Dryden-Peterson

There are many reasons why teaching inexperienced pupils is one of the teaching challenges. They may feel shy, nervous and hurtful when attending school. They may have little or no experience of education:

- Reasons are:
- a) they are from a low socio-economic background
 - b) their parents are not literate
 - c) because of their personal circumstances
 - d) they are refugees

Depending on the situation they may have a very positive attitude to education and are willing to study. The teacher must give praise and encouragement when they do something well or correctly, never ask direct questions in front of other pupils, match such pupils with a buddy- a responsible pupil who can support them with practical issues.

Classroom seating arrangement has a big impact on how the teacher teaches. When the teacher changes the seating layout, there are many advantages to doing so. It depends on the size of the class and existing infrastructure.

The seating plan in a classroom says a lot about the pedagogy and methodology which is used. The seating arrangement helps:

- a) maximize the space which is available
- b) enable the teacher to control the pupils
- c) make it easier for the pupils to write
- d) provide an easy mechanism for dividing the class into boys and girls

In many classrooms weaker pupils generally sit at the back of the class and strong ones at the front. The teacher can use "one day front, one day back" system. If the pupils sit in the back of the class on one day, they must sit in front half the following day(and vice versa). Finally this will be natural.

It can be arranged why do teachers need to manage seating? " First come, first served" seating system disadvantages pupils who need the most support. This would include pupils who are shy or who are weak.

In situation where it is possible to move the classroom furniture, there are several ways the teacher can arrange the classroom seating. The following layouts can work well:

- a) U or double U-shape
- b) Mirror
- c) Inside out
- d) Islands
- e) Family table
- f) Circle

Another challenge in teaching is managing mixed -ability classes. All the pupils have different abilities which should be recognised and valued within the classroom. The teacher can use the same materials and resources but differentiate the task, so that all the pupils can take part equally in the lesson. When forming groups the teacher should pay attention whether the groups are homogeneous (same ability) or heterogeneous (different ability).

There is no such thing as an "average pupil". The pupils have different abilities and skills in different subjects, mainly in English. It is necessary to keep a notebook and make notes about pupils' individual skills and knowledge. This is a powerful way of showing the learners that the teacher thinks about them as individuals and not just "pupils". But the teacher should keep this notebook private and in a safe place. The better the teacher knows her pupils on an individual basis, the more effective the teaching process can be. Asking pupils to share what they know is an effective and empowering teaching strategy. When doing this, the teacher should start from the weaker pupils, as the stronger ones can then add their ideas later on.

When asking questions in class, the teacher shouldn't forget about nomination. If the pupils are permitted to cry out their answers, it is likely that strong pupils will answer most of the time. When the teacher nominates specific pupils, weaker pupils can be given a chance to answer. While correcting the pupils mistakes the teacher should remember not only what to correct but also how to correct. It depends on the pupils' levels. If the teacher corrects all the time weaker pupils, they may lose confidence and feel embarrassed. When the teacher doesn't correct stronger pupils, she isn't giving them the best chance to develop their own language skills. When teaching English, the teacher might focus on correcting weaker pupils' understanding of words' meaning and form whereas for stronger

pupils, the teacher might also pay attention to pronunciation and intonation. The instructions should be given clear for all pupils and the teacher should always check with the class before doing an activity that they have to do.

What are the major challenges of learning English?

a) Learning English as a second language can be challenging for anyone. Even fluent English speakers have problems with their own language simply because of the intricacies and varieties that lie within the language itself.

b) Spelling

c) Pronunciation

d) Grammar

e) Dialects, Jargon and Slang

One of the most challenging aspects of the English language is the spelling system. Instead of having one-to-one correspondence between words and sound, any combination of vowels, consonants or vowels and consonants can be uttered quite differently than they occur.

There are many words that have silent letters or letter that together create the sound of one letter, such as "ph" for "f". This causes some difficulties for English learners and requires a lot of practice in order to master.

Pronunciation

The English language has many words that do not sound the same as they are spelled. English has different spellings that make similar sounds and it also has words with silent letters. This needs a lot of practice and the teacher should pay much attention to this .

Grammar

The grammar of English is tricky and intricate. Non-native speakers may have problems choosing grammatical patterns during speech and that can cause understanding or wrong message being relayed.

English grammar has many rules and many exceptions to these rules.

Comma rules, pronoun-agreement rules, plural forms of words have many exceptions and special cases that can be confused by the learners.

Dialects

Dialects, jargon and slang need to be learnt through interaction with groups of people and applied to real- life scenarios. Learning dialects of a certain jargon words can be another challenge while teaching and learning English.

Teaching receptive skills

The teacher should do reading and listening tasks which help the pupils develop skills and strategies. The teacher must make reading and listening texts as interesting as possible for making the pupils more motivated to learn. But many of the pupils may not have enough books. So for solving this problem the teacher should divide the class into groups and ensure that each group has a book. The text must be read aloud and the pupils must be asked many questions so that they have more chance to remember the information. There are some difficulties in teaching listening. It is very important to make the pupils listen and understand. This is especially important if the language classroom is the only place where they have this chance. The teachers often avoid doing lessons for some reasons:

- a) the audio tape or CD, or the equipment is damaged
- b) the pupils complain that they can't hear the audio clearly
- c) the audio is too long
- d) the pupils complain that they don't understand the accents.

The solution of these is having the audio transcript in case it needed.

Another solution is to stand in the middle of the room and read the text out in a loud voice. Another is to record the audio on the teacher's phone, which will give the teacher two "audio centres" which she can play simultaneously.

Teaching productive skills

The pupils often find writing boring and hard. It's the teacher's job to try and make it more interesting and less scary.

Flexibility, positivity and collaboration can help pupils' confidence in both speaking and writing. Task repetition and focusing on quantity rather than quality, can help pupils be more confident. Pupils may have good grammar, a wide vocabulary and strong receptive skills. The main aim in learning English, is to be able to say and write what they want to do.

When pupils are asked to write about topics they have no interest in or little knowledge about, it is not strange that pupils find it dull. Some classroom techniques traditionally used to teach writing, e.g. copying and dictation, are demotivating. If it is possible, the teacher should get pupils to write about things which they are interested in or if it is a piece of writing from the textbook. One way to do this is to create a mind map with the whole class on the blackboard before they start writing.

The world has become increasingly connected with more people than ever having access to an electronic device. Now face- to- face teaching can

integrate technology, now we turn to online learning and teaching which is done entirely remotely, where there is no face-to-face component. "Online" teaching is a new concept but one which can be extremely valuable. It is also likely to increase considerably in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

Practical challenges of my own practice

In the IX the form text book(O.V. Afanasyeva, I.V. Mikheeva) there is a lesson about countable and uncountable nouns.

Theme: More facts about articles with countabl and uncountable nouns.

Aim: Formation of grammar skills

Process: As you know uncountable nouns are usually not used with the indefinite article. But it is not always clear if a noun is countable or uncountable.

1) Sometimes nouns can be uncountable with one meaning and countable with another.

work(աշխատանք)-a work(ստեղծագործություն)

medicine(բժշկություն) -a medicine (դեղորայք)

speech(խոսք)-a speech(ելույթ)

cold(ցուրտ)-a cold(մրսածություն)

The pupils have to differentiate and understand the meaning first and then insert article if necessary.

2. Sometimes an uncountable noun names some material and a countable object made of this material.

iron(երկաթ)-an iron(արդուկ)

glass(ապակի)-a glass(բաժակ)

stone(քար)-a stone(կորիզ)

brick(աղյուս, կյուրթ)-a brick(մեկ աղյուսի քար)

paper(թուղթ) -a paper(թերթ)

3. Many uncountable nouns become countable when we talk about kinds or varieties of things.

soup(ապուր)-a soup(ապուրի տեսակ կամ չափաբաժին)

wine(գինի)-a wine(գինու տեսակ)

water(ջուր)-a water(ջրի տեսակ)
metal(մետաղ)- a metal(մետաղի տեսակ)

4. Some uncountable nouns become countable when they name a certain portion of stuff.

ice cream (պաղպաղակ)-an ice cream(չափաբաժին)
coffee(սուրճ)-a coffee(մեկ գավաթ սուրճ)

5. Some abstract uncountable nouns become countable to denote a specific type of phenomenon expressed by them. They often have attribute before them.

education- a good education
business - a flourishing business
experience - a bitter experience

Exercise N19 on page 133 is done in written form for forming grammar and lexical skills.

a) Cheddar is ___firm yellow cheese.

___Cheese should be kept in the fridge.

b) Can we have ___coffee and two teas, please? My doctor doesn't recommend me to drink ___coffee.

c)In the countries they used ___stone for house building. The peach has ___ stone inside.

So this kind of grammatical material is a challenge in teaching.

Another case is formation of plural. Again in thr IX form book there's a unit about noun formation.

In English there are some words that have the same form for plural and singular. Only the use of the indefinite article can show of the word is in singular or plural.

e.g.a sheep-sheep, a deer-deer

In the same text-book there is another lexical material which is about homonyms. I think this is a listening and writing challenge while explaining this material.

e.g.peace- piece

week-weak

fair-fare

bear-bare
than-then
steal-steel

The pupils should pay attention to the writing and realize the meaning. In the same text-book on page 19 there is a grammatical material about tenses, mainly more facts about Present Simple and Present Progressive. e.g. When we speak about timetable for public transport, programmes for cinemas, theatres, we use present simple, though the action is about future.

e.g. When does the train arrive in Moscow? or What time does the show begin?

The pupils usually know that present progressive shows an action going on at a present moment.

But there is a case when this tense-form is used in emotionally coloured sentences.

e.g. Jack is constantly coming late. or You are always talking at the lessons, Tom!

Present progressive is used when we talk about something that is happening around the time of speaking.

e.g.- What would you like to drink, sir?

-Nothing, thanks. I am driving.

Present progressive is used when we have arrangement.

e.g. We are meeting tomorrow.

So I think the teacher must be very skillful, experienced and highly qualified to succeed in all these processes.

Conclusion

It was a great pleasure to write this research work .

Really I enjoyed it as I learned a lot of interesting facts about challenges in teaching English . I arrived at the conclusion that we have challenges in lexics, grammar ,phonetics.

Our life is being changed and new challenges appear on the way of teaching English. I have tried to write nearly about all the possible challenges but as for me the greatest one was COVID-19. It was very unexpected for all of us, in all spheres of living, but all the teachers did their best. The pandemia revealed many social problems existing in our society (lack of mobile phones, laptops, availability to Internet)

I think the speaking challengers are stronger than reading ,listening and writing ones. Our pupils are weak at speaking as they are afraid of making mistakes. In order to overcome all the possible challenges in teaching and learning, our teachers must work hard and should be more qualified and skillful . At the same time they must master their English. These are my recommendations to my colleagues.

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