



Challenges of Classroom Research in Egypt

***Dr. Gamal M. Shehata:** *Professor of EFL Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Minia University, Egypt*

*Corresponding author e-mail: shehatagamal@yahoo.com

Receive Date: 08 Feb 2024

Revise Date: 10 Mar 2024

Accept Date: 05 Apr 2024

Publish Date: 1 July 2024

Abstract: The topic of language learning and teaching has been one of the most productive areas of research in ESL/EFL education in recent years. With the coming of the communicative approach in foreign language education, greater responsibility has been placed upon researchers to develop effective strategies that may help learners achieve the ultimate objective of language learning which is effective communication. This article, which is based on personal observation, reports on a quick survey of EFL classroom research obstacles in Egypt. Like any other developing countries, Egypt is suffering from a number of challenges that, to a great extent, impede or make it more difficult for successful EFL learning to happen. I have summarized these challenges in five major points. The first of these is lack of information and communication skills. Second, accessing the field of research. Third, informed consent. Fourth, pre-research considerations, and finally, Research aims may contradict with school priorities. The article ends with a call for the authorities in Egypt to set firm rules and standards for conducting EFL research in Egypt if we are after coping with the international levels of language education.

Key words: language research obstacles, language learning and teaching

Introduction

Publishing research is obligatory for Egyptian researchers to get a degree for the purpose of academic promotion. Researchers are encouraged to publish research internationally due to the quality standards international journals strictly follow as well as the impact factor added to the research published in them when compared to publishing in a local journal. In spite of this requirement, Egypt ranks 36 out of 231 countries in research productivity Mohamed (2020)

From my experiences working as a professor of EFL curriculum and instruction for about thirty-three years at Minia College of Education, Minia University, I can list some of the general challenges faced by Egyptian researchers when conducting classroom-based research. Before listing these challenges, I want to remind the reader that education has got a remarkably considerable importance in the 21st century due to emergence of globalization and increasing global competition. Needless to say, that in this rapid changing and competitive world, education and technology have become the master keys for respectable survival, growth

and development. Teachers are leaders and nation builders, hence, prepare generations to meet the accelerating challenges created by information and communication technologies. These challenges may be summarized as follows:

First: Lack of Information and Communication Skills (ICTs)

Teachers must not only attain basic skills of ICTs for individual development but they should also acquire these skills for daily life requirements of students. It is not only necessary to know the basic principles of ICTs and the use of ICTs for personal development but also to cope with the daily life contexts of students and teachers. The following skills are necessary for teachers in this era as recommended by (UNESCO 2005).

1. It is necessary for all teachers to be able to use ICT for their own purposes and to help students to use ICT as well.
2. Word processing is necessary for teachers in all subjects as it is helpful to make documents (e.g. letters, tests and assignments).
3. Spreadsheets are very useful for many teaching and personal uses: preparing class lists and mark sheets etc.
4. Most information systems in use today (e.g. school administration) are based on the principles of databases, and so an understanding of databases is useful for teachers.
5. Using emails and searching for information on the Internet is important for teachers.
6. Teachers in all subjects need to be role models with respect to ICT issues.
7. It is a part of a teacher's professional development and attitude to know about changes with respect to ICT in the profession.”.

Second: Accessing the Field of Research

It is important for any researcher to visit the target research place which represents the research environment, and make sure that place, sample, and equipment fit the objectives of the research in question. There are many practical issues to consider when conducting research in schools, but contacting the designated the target research place contacts and developing positive relationships with them can be arguably the most challenging. Gaining access to schools can be difficult for all researchers but particularly for early researchers. As a research advisor, I realize that one of my main responsibilities is to maintain contact with the schools study contacts and organize data collection dates. However, this could often be challenging. In fact, not all research advisors do this.

Third: Informed Consent

When conducting research, it is essential to gain informed consent from all relevant parties. All research will require ethical approval from a relevant board, whether at college or at school. In the case of schools and in particular children, consent is often required from the head teacher or senior management in the school where the research is before the research is /conducted, from the children's parent/guardian. **In Egypt**, this is not done, and therefore it could be considered an ethical violation.

If a child was withdrawn from the research, the research team would provide the child with an alternative activity such as a cross word to avoid the child feeling left out or other children questioning why the child was unable to participate. **In Egypt**, children who are not involved in a study are dropped from the data collection.

Fourth: Pre-research Considerations

Research conducted by a post graduate researcher may involve academic intervention such as experimenting with a new enrichment program. This kind of research, and others, require more agreements. The agreement of the school district is not enough, it requires the agreement of both the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics and the State Security.

Fifth: Research Aims May Contradict School Priorities.

Although a researcher does not go to the target school of his research without a formal letter from the dean of college to the deputy minister of education in the government where the research is expected to be conducted, He/she may be faced with some administrative or curriculum considerations such as class sizes and the distribution of subject matter over the school time. The focus of the research and its aims may not align with the priorities of schools which can lead to further practical problems. My experience made me aware that schools often show resistance to engagement with new educational or research programs.

conclusion

In addition to the above, I can, with much confidence, add private tutoring which is being practiced at an alarming scale in Egypt. This makes it difficult for researchers to find the required target sample. Also, teachers' bulky teaching loads, limited time and resources, lack of technical and methodological expertise, insufficient training and seminars on research, and disappointments caused by possible fear of advisor's satisfaction are real obstacles. More disappointing is researcher's' illiteracy of how to find out the suitable statistical formula for calculating and analyzing the research data. Finally, I call upon the ministry of education and the deans of colleges of education in Egypt to provide guidelines and specified educational programs for Egyptian

researchers to help overcome the challenges they face while conducting language classroom research in both public schools and colleges of education.

Tutoring Centers in Egypt encourage students to leave schools after being enrolled.



References

Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, (UNESCO 2005). Paris, 20 October 2005.

Mohamed, Ahmed Mohamed Alaa Eldin. (2020). *Linguistic Challenges Facing Egyptian Researchers in Writing English Research Articles for International Publication*. Doctoral dissertation Submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, Egypt.