

The Status of English Language in the University Between Reality and Ambition

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This seminar is self-criticism. It sheds light on two major aspects:

I. The students' curricular problem with English language, and

II. The problem of media and public relations with English language

REALITY:

I. The problem of English language as curriculum

With the exception of the universities where English language is used as mother tongue or first language, most of the universities that use English as a major curricular language throughout the world suffer from the students with poor background of their English language, starting with freshmen (first-year students), sophomores (second-year students), juniors and seniors (third and fourth-year students).

Freshmen students that have poor language skills cannot improve those skills in the following years by chance.



By reason or another, these students themselves also suffer from their poor English levels particularly

when they find their major subject matters are delivered in English, and

some of the teachers are even foreigners who do not know the students' local languages in order to help translate some of the key words or phrases to these students.

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Cihan University provides English courses not only to its undergraduate and graduate students, but also to the community free of charges in order to develop young people's skills in English language.



Despite all these efforts, still students fail to learn English as properly as possible or to keep up with their major subject matters,

but why?

There are many reasons for students' failure in this regard:



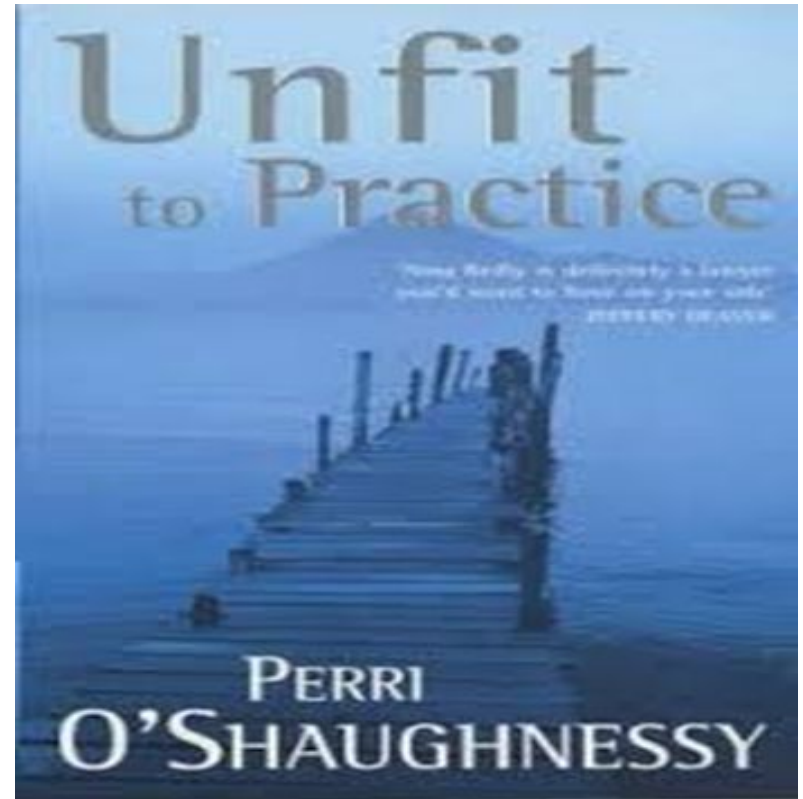
Students in the Middle East, in general, are accustomed to question-based learning methods, whereas foreign language learning requires training, drilling and feeding back methods. This is basically because there are certain skills in language learning such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, need training to practice, whereas grammar stands as a wedge to hold on the structure altogether.

On the other hand, teachers are bound to university requirements; most specifically question-based methods of teaching in order to prepare the students for exam. The result is students may pass the exams without having the least knowledge of the foreign language.

Some students are unwilling to and alienate themselves from learning foreign languages at this age of adolescence especially morning students,



The adopted English teaching programs (TEFL) and textbooks fail in meeting the students' needs and aims, because the students need remedial courses before going to English I level.



Ambition

what can be done?

There are certain measures that can be suggested.

1. One of the suggestions is to let the newly registered students sit for placement tests to see how many of them get above 50%. These will go directly to Academic English. As for those who get below 50%, they should have remedial courses. These courses are non-credited but compulsory to pass. The second group may be enrolled in Academic English in later courses.

Ambition

what can be done?

2. The university can set a high-profiled committee constituent of experts in language teaching to reconsider all the study plans and reevaluate the curricular English textbooks.

3. English teachers must be oriented to focus on students' drills in language skills in the early stages of their academic studies, rather than problem-based methods.

Reality

II. The problem of media and public relations with English language

Cihan University is at the footstep of gaining ISO through **Bologna Process**. That is why not only curricular systems must follow this process, but also all the admin sections in the university. Unfortunately, if not all, almost all the posters, slogans, logos and signs written in English affiliated to or issued in the name of Cihan University suffer from significant mistakes in spellings, grammar, choice of words, etc. These are front pages of the university to the guests and public as well.

Let's have a look at some of these prints made in the name of Cihan University:

CIHAN UNIVERSITY-ERBIL'S PECULIAR EXAMPLE

During the present 2019-2020 academic year, Cihan University-Erbil has experienced a novel example by increasing teaching hours and focusing on freshmen's spoken language, team and peer work, delivering seminars as well as the due classical method.

The experience was great but due to the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown, the final evaluation can't be measured this academic year.

Posters

Look at this so called “SENTENCE”, please.

- ▶ It says: “Before you smoke.....Think about it’s result”.
- ▶ It begins with a time clause “Before you smoke....”. Here the word “smoke” is a verb, but the main clause refers to “It’s” with an apostrophe meaning ‘It is’ not the possessive “Its”, and then “Think about it’s result”, whose result? Using “it” means a pronoun being used for an aforesaid noun, but there isn’t any noun in the time clause. So we have a very poor compound sentence with two irrelevant clauses. They don’t match neither in meaning nor in structure.



Posters

- ▶ Kindly behold this poster!
- ▶ Precisely the spelling of the word “smock”. This word means a loose dress or blouse with circled ornamentation in the upper side.
- ▶ Then we come to a grammatical mistake which is “Your skin **get** grey”. In early stages of English courses, we teach the students to use **third person singular S** in Present simple Tense. Hence, the verb must be “ your skin **gets**”.



Posters

► It is nice to quote from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. But if you google it by writing just the initial words of the quotation, you'll find the rest of the sentence: "*There's nothing either good or bad, but thinking **makes** it so.*" Again we have a problem with **Third Person Singular S**.

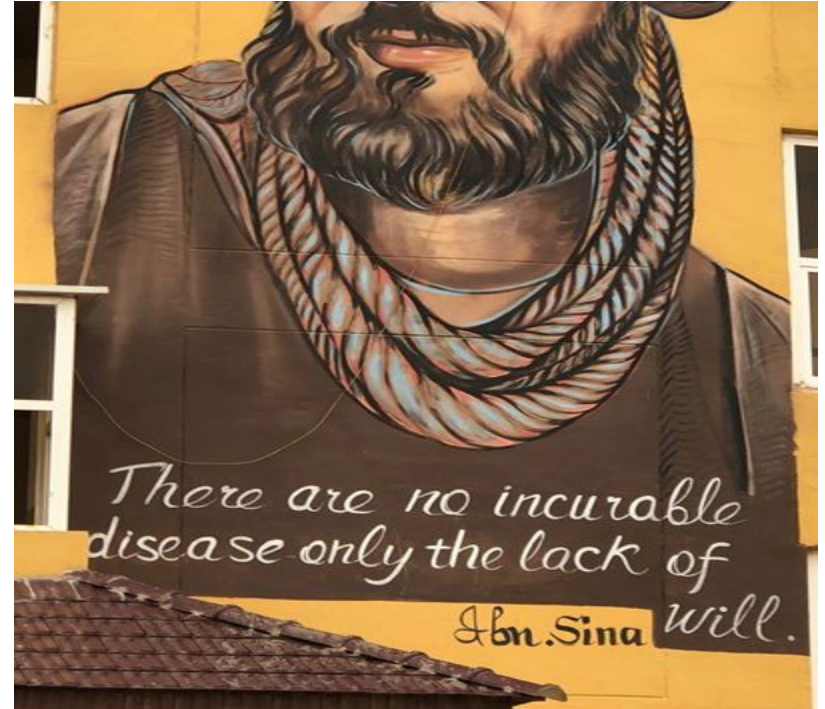
► Another point is worth mentioning: we do **NOT** use **capital letters** after **commas**. Take a second look at the word "But".



Posters

▶ We either say: “There’s no incurable disease.....”, or we may say “There **are** no incurable diseases”, don’t we? So how come that the subject (expletive **there**)“There are (plural)” is followed by a singular noun “disease” not “diseases”

▶ Again it is shown on google. Try to double check it!



Banners

- ▶ How many mistakes can we find here?
- ▶ The first one is, again, **Third Person Singular S**. The sentence must be Cihan University-Erbil **welcomes**, not “welcome”.
- ▶ The second one is in the word “respectful”. **Respectful** means people who respect. **Respectable** is used for positions, properties, statuses, whereas **respected** is used for people whom we respect. So, did these guests come to the graduation ceremony to show respect or to be treated as respected. The word should be “**Respected**”.



Signs

This photo is taken on Graduation Day. Please notice the sign affixed on graduates' chair.

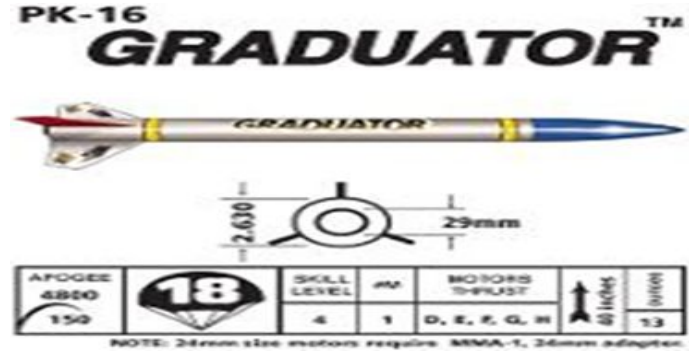
The word “graduator” refers to tools or devices more than it does to students' graduation; then the word should have been “gra'duates” rather than gradulators, because “gra'duates is more applicable and generally used worldwide. The meanings of the word are:

One who determines or indicates graduation,

Signs

2. A **graduator** of instruments. An instrument for dividing any line, straight or curved, into smaller regular intervals,

3. An apparatus for diffusing a solution, such as brine or vinegar, over a large surface, for exposure to the air.



Ambition

- ▶ There is one sole suggestion can be presented here.
- ▶ The University may set a supreme board or committee for language integrity. By this---
- ▶ Every slogan, logo, brochure, flyer, poster and every handout or catalogue that are issued by or in the name of the university or any department or admin section affiliated to the university must be scrutinized and approved by the SUPREME COMMITTEE for LANGUAGE INTEGRITY prior to their implementation and materialization.

THANKS FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION

▶ Now I'll be delighted to receive your remarks and questions if there's any. Otherwise you may send me to

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