

## **Excellence in Language Education**

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*Good Teachers are Made Not Born*

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### **Abstract**

The primary goal of the study is to practise some systematic strategies for foreign language instruction despite the fact that no single approach to language classroom instruction is inherently superior to others; instead the choice of an approach should be determined by the teacher, students, the subject matter, and the situation.

The paper adopts certain strategies which may assist EFL teachers to excel in their work and continue their professional development. Hence, it is intended for language teachers who understand the value of good teaching and like to produce academically successful students. The study could also help college student teachers to acquire new strategies in order not only to succeed but also to excel in their learning and future career.

### **1. Introduction**

Beginning, teachers always ask: Why do some students not like to attend classes regularly, or participate in the classroom actively, or accomplish their assignments willingly, or even sit their tests readily? There is no doubt that college students, generally speaking, seem smart enough to reach this level of study, and eager to succeed and get a degree; yet, some lack enthusiasm or interest in their study. The other questions the researcher would like to pose are: Whose fault is it the teacher's or the student's for being slack? Is there a way to teach every student how to invest his time and excel rather than giving him a second or a third chance to sit a compensatory test; or adding a few marks to his test scores to get the passing mark (50 out of 100); or letting him fail and be a repeater or drop out of university? What is more, is the teacher truly willing to adopt and

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adapt new strategies that could make a difference in his professional development and arouse students' attention, interest and enthusiasm? 'P.O.W.E.R. Learning' Robert Feldman (2005) claims, could be the answer to the aforementioned questions. Feldman' approach comprises five principles or strategies that a learner can follow to maximize his potential and provide the means to achieve academic success.

The researcher attempts in the first part of this study to present Feldman's approach, which as he asserts, provides a systematic framework for organizing the strategies that help to stimulate intellect and give a sense of mastery and success and finally facilitate language learning. In the second part of the study the researcher will focus on experimenting Feldman's approach to evaluate his claim before being tempted to adopting it hastily.

The significance of the study is two-folded: the first is for teachers to experiment a new pedagogical approach, and combine philosophy with research results, and excel in their profession, whereas, the second is for students to work well and accomplish academic success.

## **2. What is P.O.W.E.R. Learning?**

P.O.W. E. R. Learning approach was invented by Robert S. Feldman, University of Massachusetts (2005). It is merely an acronym, formed from the first letters of five steps that are intended to help students take in, process, and make use of the information acquired at university. **Prepare, Organize, Work, Evaluate, and Rethink** comprise a simple framework that Feldman believes will increase a student's chance of success at any task from writing an essay to getting excellent on any exam. The steps are illustrated below.

### **2.1 Prepare**

The first step of accomplishing any task is preparation and planning. The best way to plan, Feldman suggests, is to use goal-setting strategies, which are basically two: long-term goals and short term goals. The former are for major accomplishments like having a degree; and the latter are for the relatively limited steps one would take on the road to accomplish long term goals like doing assignment or research work.

### **2.2 Organize**

The next step is to determine the best way to accomplish the goals undertaken in the preparation stage. This step involves two levels: gathering and utilizing the necessary tools-including books, dictionaries, and perhaps a computer, access to the internet, the library and the like- and considering and reviewing the academic skills a learner will need to

successfully complete college tasks like improving his writing skill, or increasing his vocabulary, using the internet.

### **2.3 Work**

If a learner has consciously carried out the preparation and organization stages, and has the motivation to work, what he needs now is to redirect his psychological energies and inner power towards the work he wants to accomplish, and view success as a result of effort.

### **2.4 Evaluate**

The fourth step is evaluation which consists of determining how well his work matches the goals for it. If he did well on an exam, he should congratulate himself, and evaluate his accomplishment; if not, he should go back to work and revise what he has done or missed.

### **2.5 Rethink**

The last step is to rethink of what he has accomplished with a fresh eye. To rethink involves critical thinking, i.e., reanalyzing, questioning, and challenging his underlying assumptions to see if something is missing, or if the accomplishment is satisfactory.

## **3. Method**

These five strategies of preparing, organizing, working, evaluating, and rethinking were used in this study for teaching rather than for learning. The researcher aimed at investigating their effectiveness in teaching. The subjects of the experiment were fourth year EFL students in 2011-2012. The Academic Subject to be used was 'Language Assessment.' The reasons behind reversing the task, i.e., a teaching approach rather than a learning approach were because it is felt that teachers rather than students

- have more time to experience a new approach,
- are more ready to adopt a new way of instruction,
- are more familiar with implementing experimental work,
- and finally have the tools to carry out the work.

It is hoped that this classroom-centered research will provide a great deal of useful information about how FL instruction is actually carried out, help teachers explore the pedagogical applications of this approach, and above all, as Long (1983a) stated, 'help to resist temptation to jump on the various methodological bandwagons that come rolling along from time to time.'

Before starting to implement this approach, it may advisable to define the term strategies as used in this paper to mean approaches that can be

used across curricular areas to support the learning of students. The goals of such strategies are to enhance deep learning and provide effective instruction of English language. To provide enhancement, Herrell and Jordan (2004: 5) emphasize the following:

- Teachers should provide instruction in a way that ensures that students are given comprehensible input.
- Teachers should provide opportunities to increase verbal interaction in classroom activities.
- Teachers should provide instruction that contextualizes language as far as possible (visuals, actions).
- Teachers should use grouping techniques that reduce the anxiety of the students as much as possible.
- Teachers should provide activities in the classroom that offer opportunities for active involvement of the students.

These tips and some more are implemented in the steps of the process that follows.

### **3.1 PREPARE**

The first step of accomplishing any task as mentioned earlier is preparation and planning. For a teacher, the best way to plan for teaching a course of study is to set the course aims and objectives. In this experiment, the researcher is going to teach a chapter from Al-Juboury, N. *A teacher's Guide to Language Assessment*, which is one of the courses of study for EFL fourth-year students, in the Department of English at the College of Education. The major aim of teaching this course is exploring the fundamental techniques of test construction in order to enable learners to design classroom English language tests for intermediate and preparatory stages of schooling. This aim, stated simply and concisely, sums up the intended outcome in terms of benefit to the students and leads to the selection of relevant objectives. Shipman (1979) points out that 'the effectiveness of schooling can be judged by the degree to which the aims and the objectives of a school have been attended.' Shipman suggests that a teacher can arrive at the objective of a course by asking the question, 'What will my pupils know and be able to do at the end of their course which at present they do not know, or cannot know?'

The following is an overall and detailed translation of the single aim aforementioned into a related set of practical objectives.

**Aim:** to enable 4<sup>th</sup> year students to design classroom tests of EFL by using different techniques .

**General Objectives:**

- To develop understanding of the basic concepts of testing
- To develop detailed knowledge of the chief characteristics of good tests
- To explore the main approaches to language testing
- To understand thoroughly and elaborately different testing techniques
- To examine and practice specific techniques of testing each of the components and skills of English as taught to speakers of other languages. The material is presented in a series of six chapters.

### ***The students learning objectives***

At the end of the course students should be able to

- identify the main purposes of testing, types of tests, modes of testing
- identify the basic features of good tests
- distinguish the main approaches to language testing
- have theoretical and practical knowledge of the different testing techniques
- construct a variety of tests and test items in relation to language elements and skills
- score various types of tests

Once the aim and objectives of the subject material were set, the teacher devoted the chapter 'Approaches to language testing' for this experiment aiming at enabling students to use English to interact in the classroom. The topic explores the different approaches to language testing which are influenced by theories about the nature of language which in turn influences theories about language learning, methods of teaching, and testing. The purpose of the subject is to explore the main approaches to language testing, whereas the learning outcome is to enable students to distinguish these approaches and recognize the types of tests associated with each.

Two classes of twenty students each underwent the experiment. Each class was taught according to a method. In Class A, the conventional method of lecturing and discussion was followed. This traditional teaching method of stand-and-deliver is the most prominent instructional strategy in Iraqi colleges of education, and is normally carried out as Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state within institutionalized systems, 'where the ingredients of the teaching/learning process are centralized, the objectives predetermined, and the content unalterable.' The researcher, however, believes that reliance on completing a textbook, and later on test scores, are the antithesis of the desire to make learning more reflective, more entertaining, and more relevant to students' diverse interests. The merits of this Teacher-centered Method are: providing a large amount of information

to many learners, keeping their attention, and maximizing the instructor's control. It is also a convenient way as many students are inactive, whilst those who seem active normally depend on parroting information in their textbooks for classroom participation and for the examinations in order to get good grades. Conversely, the drawbacks of this method involve disengaging students from the learning process which leads to forgetting the information quickly, minimizing feedback from them, and leading students to be passive learners which hinder interaction and critical thinking.

The other method to be used was completely different. It was Learning-centered. The content of the material to be taught would be a mixture of what the students had prepared from their textbooks, and some relevant material taken from the Internet which would be prepared by the researcher herself. In this way the students would not depend solely on what they had learnt by rote from the textbook but had to exhibit their comprehension by processing this knowledge to perform some new tasks. A test would also be needed to assess students' comprehension.

### **3.2 ORGANIZE**

With the intention to accomplish the plan set in the preparation part, the researcher following the first method needed to prepare the material before delivering it lest some details might be forgotten. Questions were usually formed and asked in the class with no need for previous preparation except for a couple of questions that require deep thinking.

In POWER teaching, students would be divided into four groups of mixed abilities but with a common goal of learning preselected material. This method helps participants to learn as a group in a noncompetitive environment but are assessed as individuals. Group work is definitely time consuming, requires excellent classroom management skills and entails the challenge of obtaining a quality effort of each team member, yet in small group setting, students have a greater opportunity for participation and possibility of increased learning and retention.

For grouping students, the researcher would prepare a list of the members of the four groups, and set a specific time which varies with the type of activity. Few minutes were to be devoted first to explaining the tasks to help students understand what the material given was, and how to use it.

Handouts of the principles of the testing approaches would be organized in slips to be distributed among the students of class B to do the task of classification. A second task of matching some questions with their testing approaches would also be prepared and organized to be given later to the groups. The third and final task would be some questions for discussion. This task could be used as a take-home test.

The time of the lecture was two hours, the first would be devoted to discussing the subject matter and the second for testing. Some questions early prepared for both groups needed to be photocopied and organized for each class. .

### **3.3 WORK**

#### **3.3.1 Class A**

In Class A, the researcher following the traditional mode of classroom organization, i.e., teacher-fronted one, with learners sitting in rows facing him, started her lecture by explaining briefly the major theories of language which have influenced methods of learning and teaching and eventually testing. Then she asked a number of questions concerning the approaches to language testing such as:

1. What are the characteristics of Essay-Translation Approach?
2. What are the merits and drawbacks of this approach?
3. What are the characteristics of the Structuralist Approach?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

Similar questions were asked about the other two approaches, the Integrative and the Communicative approaches. Less than twelve students participated in responding to these questions. Some of them participated more than once. The rest were mere listeners, half of whom had not even studied the material before coming to the classroom. They simply waited for the teacher to explain the whole thing. Later, the examples given in the textbook concerning each approach were illustrated. The last step was introducing two or three closing questions which involved their opinions of practicing one of these testing approaches to the exclusion of others, or being eclectic and choosing among these testing approaches so as to create their own unique blend. The statements given below were written on the board for discussion.

1. No test can be wholly analytical or wholly integrative.  
Discuss.
2. There is always a need to bring testing procedures into step with teaching goals.
3. Today's tests tend to use the best features of the assessment approaches.

Students' answers varied between sticking to the structuralist testing approach and techniques, which seemed common to them, and the Communicative testing approach, which they had to follow as the new curriculum of English language adopted this approach, although they

seemed incapable of designing communicative questions. Again five or six students did not share in the discussion.

### **3.3.2 Class B**

In Class B, the researcher followed a different approach from that of teacher's centered. She varied the format of classroom instruction, used group work (4groups), and organized jigsaw reading tasks.

The principles of the four approaches were presented to the groups in slips mixed up and each team was asked to categorize the slips. The students in each group read the slips, discussed which slip referred to which approach. Then, they interacted and practised some language functions like suggesting, agreeing, disagreeing, asking, replying and the like. Working as a team, one student might read a slip while the others listened and discussed where the slip referred to. Then another student had to arrange the slips according to their approaches. In an alternative way, each student in a group might stand for an approach and had to keep the slips of his approach. When a slip was read one would say, 'It is mine,' and discussed her reasons for claiming it. Others would either agree or disagree with her and so on till all the slips were distributed. After completing the task, the members of the first group had to present the principles of one of the approaches either orally or by writing them on the board. The other groups discussed the correctness of the work. Similarly, the second group would do the same with the second approach and so on.

Once this task is completed the researcher would give the groups another task. This time a number of questions were given to each group in order to recognize the approach that each of the questions given could belong to. A discussion was to be held later to see if the answers were correct or not. The third and last task would be a discussion of the possibility of using a variety of question techniques when giving a test or being restricted to the types of questions related to each approach. This last task is similar to the one given to Class A .

### ***Samples of the tasks given to Class B***

#### ***First Task*** (Time :20 minutes)

Directions: The following statements refer to the four main approaches to language testing. Group them into the approaches they belong: (1) essay–translation, (2) structuralist, (3) integrative, and (4) communicative.



Language use is often emphasized to the exclusion of language usage.

A cloze test is a holistic that is , grammar and vocabulary and overall meaning are tested simultaneously

Tests are easy to answer and encourage guessing and cheating

Contrastive analysis is used to identify problems faced by second language learners.

No special skill or expertise in testing is required according to this approach

TOEFL, MLA Cooperative Tests, EPTB (Davies, 1964) are examples of tests that belong to this approach

Some areas such as mathematics are more amendable to criterion – referenced than literature for example. So this type of assessment is sometimes difficult to apply.

This trend is a synthesis of the two earlier trends incorporating the concern for objectivity of one and the relative freedom of expression of the other

This assessment has the view that testing can be objective, precise , reliable scientific, . and easy to administer to a large number of testees at one time

This approach introduces the concept of criterion-referenced assessment in preference to norm-referenced assessment.

The principle of authenticity is an important aspect in this approach

Tests are concerned with global view of proficiency and assess several elements and skills simultaneously.

This approach though depends on global assessment but it cannot be considered highly communicative or authentic.

This trend is a synthesis of the two earlier trends incorporating the concern for objectivity of one and the relative freedom of expression

The trend focuses on discrete point tests and assess one skill at a time and only one aspect of a skill.

This approach is commonly referred to as the pre-scientific stage of language testing.

Detailed statements of each performance level serve to increase reliability of scoring

Students' responses were assessed on the basis of subjective evaluations which affects reliability.

This approach involves the testing of language in context and is thus concerned primarily with meaning and the total communicative effect of discourse

Contrastive analysis is used to identify problems faced by second language learners.

Dictation is not only valid in itself (performance tasks testing performance ability) but also it contains great validity.

A cloze test is holistic, that is, grammar and vocabulary and overall meaning are tested simultaneously

There is no sense in isolating elements from their context . Language proficiency is more than just the sum of discrete elements

No clear distinction was drawn between teaching and testing. Dictation, translation, & composition were teaching strategies and testing exercises

Which of these slips are considered disadvantages of their assessment approaches?

**Second Task** (time :10 minutes)

Go through the following questions (but don't answer them) and state to which testing approach each of them refers.

1. Fill in each blank space in the following passage with only one word.

Here is the story of the ant and the grasshopper. It is ---- cold winter's day and an ant is bringing out some grains of corn that he ---- in the summer as he wants to dry ---- up. A grasshopper who is very hungry sees him ---- says, 'Give me a few grains of corn; I am dying ---- hunger.' 'But,' says the ant, 'what did you ---- in the summer? Didn't you store up any corn?'

The grasshopper ---- that he was too busy singing all summer. The ---- then said, 'If you sang all summer, ---- can dance all winter.'

2. Choose the letter of the word that best completes each sentence
  1. John had an accident because he did not use his ---- sense.  
A. ordinary    B. usual    C. common    D. everyday
  2. That child is extremely ---- . he is always answering people back.  
A. irresponsible    B. immoral    C. impolite    D. irrational
  3. she never told anyone because she was ---- of what she had done.  
A. incapable    B. selfish    C. useless    D. ashamed
3. For each word given write two sentences as indicated between brackets
  1. smoking ( as a gerund as a participle)
  2. either (as adjective and as a conjunction)
  3. that ( as a pronoun and conjunction)
4. Analyze the following passages indicating the clauses, their kind and their function.
  1. Though fond of many acquaintances, I desire an intimacy only with a few. The Man in Black, whom I have often mentioned , is one whose friendship I could wish to acquire, because he possesses my esteem'- Oliver Goldsmith, *The Man in Black*.
  2. When the teacher asked what part of speech a word was, John said, 'I can tell you the answer, if you will give me a sentence in which the word is used'.
5. Read the instructions for this experiment  
Pour the water into a displacement vessel until it overflows through the pipe into a measuring jar. Read the level of water surface in the measuring jar. Then lower the solid into the vessel until it is completely covered with water,...

**This is your report**

Water 1) ....into a displacement vessel until it 2)....through the pipe into a measuring jar. The level of water surface in the measuring jar 3).... . Then the solid 4).... into the vessel until it 5).... by water, ...

(adopted from Rea, Pauline 1982)

6. Construct four sentences, two containing coordinating conjunctions, and two containing subordinating conjunctions, using different conjunction in each sentence.

7. Identify the one underlined expression that must be changed in order to correct the sentence

There were two men arguing with each other in the car park when suddenly one A

B

punched other and knocked him to the ground. D

C

8. Combine the group of sentences to form one complex sentence

I returned to the city. I had been born there. I had been absent for many years. Many of its narrow streets had been demolished . so had their picturesque houses. They had made way for shops. They were modern but undistinguished. I was dismayed to find this.

9. Complete the dialogue with one word in each gap.

Operator: Lloyd bank. How can I ----- you?

Caller : Could I ----- to Mr. Johns, Please?

Operator: ----- on a moment. I'm sorry, the line ----- busy. Can I ----- a message?

Caller : This is Gary Watson. Can you ask him to ----- me back?]

Operator: Can I -----your number?

Caller : He's got it.

Operator: OK, I'll ----- him your message .

Caller : Thank you.

10. For each of the beginning in list A, choose an ending from list B

List A

List B

1. Romeo and Juliet

a. is a lot to carry by yourself

2. Last night's news

b. were going camping this weekend

3. Twenty five kilos

c. was written by Shakespeare

d. is rather exciting, I thought

**Task Three** (Time : 10 minutes)

Discuss this statements.

1. No test can be wholly analytical or wholly integrative..

2. There is always a need to bring testing procedures into step with teaching goals.

### 3.4 Evaluation

Evaluation is a crucial step to assess the information that students have been learning. It also plays a major role in the development of EFL learning and teaching. Evaluation Chastain (1988:379) states, encompasses both informal estimates of student work, and formalized testing procedures. He adds that the advantage of the first is that the feedback which the teacher and the students receive is immediate, and constant, but it is highly subjective and based on short term learning. The advantage of the second is that it is more concrete and thereby more objective. The weakness is that it causes anxiety among some students that are unable to perform to their capability. Besides, the score on any given test cannot represent adequately what the students have learnt.

When students finished their tasks and discussion, the researcher needed to assess whether they were able to recall what they had studied. Feldman(2005) points out that evaluation will certainly help students test the limits of their memory and assess areas where more work is needed. The questions need to elicit their comprehension of the approaches and their ability to generate meaningful utterances as opposed to memorization. In addition, teachers are required to test deep learning by giving students questions that require thinking and production, i.e., going beyond surface to deep learning and comprehension. Such questions could also be given as assignment, or take-home exam. For example, students might be asked to write an essay about one or both of the statements given in Task Three.

For evaluating Class A, students' responses to the teacher's questions were evaluated immediately on a scale of (5 marks to 0) as shown below. Class B were also evaluated on the same scale. The researcher went around listened to the discussion of each group and gave students scores. The rubric applied in the evaluation of oral class participation, or team discussion for both groups was as follows

- 5 Marks for completely correct response
- 4 Marks for correct response but with very few mistakes
- 3 Marks for correct response but not explained thoroughly.
- 2 Marks for incomplete answer
- 1 Mark for incomprehensible answer
- 0 For no answer at all.

This informal estimate of students' participation in group discussions was followed by a written test of four questions given to Class A and B (see the Appendix ). The first question was a five-item recognition question in which students were to identify the testing approach of each item. In the second and third questions, they were to specify the features of each

approach and its drawback. The last question required discussing a statement,(See the Appendix). The total score of the written test was 20.

### 3.4.1 Interpretation of the results

The scores on the oral discussion questions (out of 5), and those on the written test

( out of 20) were put together and the grand total score was 25. The results are shown in Table (1). The two sets of data were calculated statistically which involved mean, standard deviation, and t-test, to see if the difference between them is significant. The mean score of the Class A was (11.7) and that of Class B was (18.5). The results indicated that students of Class B showed a higher mean score than students of Class A, which in turn indicated their mastery of the subject studied.

The t-test value was found to be (4.7337). This number is larger than that required for the (0.05) confidence level (1.960), and larger than that required for the (0.01) confidence level (2.576). This means that the difference between the performance of the two groups A and B was significant at (0.05) and (0.01) levels and 38 degrees of freedom in favour of the new approach of teaching. The formula used is that of Crocker's.

$$t = \frac{M1 - M2}{\sqrt{\left[ \left( \frac{\Sigma d1^2 + \Sigma d2^2}{N1+N2 - 2} \right) \left( \frac{1}{N1} + \frac{1}{N2} \right) \right]}} \quad (\text{Crocker, 1981:64})$$

$$t = \frac{18.5 - 11.7}{\sqrt{\left[ \left( \frac{\Sigma 157 + \Sigma 627.16}{N1+N2 - 2} \right) \left( \frac{1}{20} + \frac{1}{20} \right) \right]}}$$

$$t = 4.7337$$

Table 1  
Distributions of Marks in Class A and Class B

Class A Mark	Discussion n	Test 20	Total 25	Class B Mark	Discussion n	Test 20	Total 25
1	3	14	17	1	3	12	15
2	2	10	12	2	2	13	15
3	0	7	7	3	4	15	19
4	4	17	21	4	4	16	20
5	1	9	10	5	5	19	24
6	4	18	22	6	3	15	18
7	3	12	15	7	4	16	20
8	2	10	12	8	3	15	18
9	1	7	8	9	2	14	16
10	0	0	0	10	5	19	24
11	4	17	21	11	4	16	20
12	0	0	0	12	4	16	20
13	1	4	5	13	3	13	16
14	2	9	11	14	3	15	18
15	3	15	18	15	5	18	23
16	1	4	5	16	3	14	17
17	3	12	15	17	2	14	16
18	0	3	3	18	4	16	20
19	2	11	13	19	3	13	16
20	3	16	19	20	2	13	15
Total	39	195	234	Total	68	302	370
Mean	1.95	9.75	11.7	Mean	3.4	15.1	18.5

### ***Validity and Reliability***

Although the test given was an informal classroom test, the researcher preferred to establish a statistical correlation between the two set of scores obtained by the two groups and their scores at the final examinations in 2010. This empirical validity is needed to assure that 'the measure is scientifically and operationally sterile' (Ebil,196:645, cited in Low, 1985:154)). Pearson' formula was used for empirical validity. The validity coefficient was found to (0.734) and (0.879) for Class A and B respectively. The reliability of the test was ensured via standard tasks, standard

conditioned, standard scoring and multiple samples of the testees' performance (Valette, 1977:44-46). Besides, Kuder-Richardson formula (cited in Valette:53) was used to estimate the reliability statistically, and was found to be 0.987 for Class A and 0.976 for class B. results gave support to the Feldman POWER Approach, .and shows that it is more effective than the traditional one.

### **3.5 RETHINK**

Rethinking is the last step to be taken to assist in bridging ideas and theories with practice. Feldman (2005) sees that 'while evaluation means considering how well what we have done matches our initial goals, rethinking means reconsidering not just the outcome of our efforts but the ideas and the process we have just used to get there.' The researcher reconsidered what have been accomplished by reviewing the strategies or steps used to see what seemed to work or to suggest some alternatives that might work better.

Considering the goals set earlier, the researcher got to the same destination by taking two routes or two methods of teaching: the fastest and most direct route which required less amount of time, and effort exercised by the teacher, and the longer and more tiring route but proved to be better and worth doing as it made positive change and gave better result. What is more, it created a safe climate for thinking in the classroom which encouraged students to take risks, collaborate, raise questions, raise discrepancies, and value ideas. It also enabled learners to go beyond knowing to actually understanding information. This constructive approach compared to the first receptive learning encouraged students to be active researchers who interact, explore, inquire, analyze, and solve problems as a means of learning and developing understanding. The receptive method on the other hand, though easier, faster and more direct, failed to arouse students' interest in the material, or make them fully understand the information given. This result was shown by their low scores on the test. Besides half of the students were passive learners. Some even avoided attending class for fear of being asked to take part in the discussion which they had not prepared. At the end of the lecture a few came with different excuses and asked for a chance to resit the test as if taking the test were more important than attending the class. It is a pity that passing an exam seems to some students more important than learning.

To evaluate the steps taken, it could be said that the first step, planning, did require some time and effort to look for resources from books and the internet to be included in the lecture. The rewarding thing is that once the lecturer did it, the material can be saved and reused. The second step, organization of the material, also required some innovation and



creativity which instructors can possess gradually. Using jigsaw reading for instance could be replaced by showing students a short video tape of some material related to the material in hand at the beginning of the lecture and thus incorporating visual and verbal material. At a later stage, students might participate in collecting extra material from books or from some Web Sites to use in the classroom. The third step of working seemed interesting as the students were occupied by doing some tasks and learning to learn. The vital importance was that students felt safe when sharing their thoughts with their colleagues without being ridiculed or punished for giving wrong answers. They took risks and made mistakes without feeling embarrassed. Hence, collaborative thinking encouraged students to feel confident. The group formed a true community who acknowledged their interconnectedness, had a sense of their common purpose, respected their differences, shared in group decision making and responsibility for the actions of the group and supported each other's growth. In this step the researcher felt that students had realized the old Chinese saying 'Tell me and I'll forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I'll understand.' Moreover, it seemed that students learned from each other easier than from a teacher. This step also gave an opportunity to smart students to lead the process, ask questions, explain some difficulties experienced by their colleagues in the team, as students occasionally hesitated to ask the teacher about a certain difficulty, but with their colleagues the environment seemed safer.

The fourth step is evaluation which certainly help teachers test his students' limits of memory and comprehension. Both teachers and students find testing the most unpopular part of the academic life because they produce fear, anxiety, and a focus on grades instead of learning for learning's sake (Feldman, 005). Still, tests are necessary for identifying what a student knows and what he still needs to learn. Tests help to show a student's performance as compared to that of others. What is more, tests function as a motivation to learn material thoroughly.

Feldman (2005:119) adds another reason why students dislike tests. 'Students assume that when they do badly on a test it means that they are stupid, or that they will never do better again, and that their life is ruined if their parents know about their results. But what a student needs to know is that if he does not do well on a test he is the same person he was before he took the test – no better, no worse. He just did badly on a test.'

An interesting issue raised by Hay (cited in Costa, 2001:9) concerns testing recall of knowledge and whether it is needed. He points out that learners nowadays have easy access to information stored electronically in computer memories that are infinitely larger than their own and wonders whether this means that learners no longer need to memorize anything or

whether recall of information is becoming passé? Hay (ibid) stated that in 1984 educator John Goodlad and his researchers found that although teachers across the United States recognized the importance of higher level of thinking skills when they assessed students they tested for recall of information about 75 percent of the time. Recall of information is the lowest level of thinking in Bloom's taxonomy but it is still needed. The researcher shared the view of the importance of information stored in our memories which provides the cultural framework for our understanding of the world and for our vision of the future. In other words teaching and testing are the two sides of the same coin. Interestingly, many young Iraqi students like to ask their parents at home to do the role of the teacher and examine them of what they have studied. Sometimes mothers rather than fathers insist on doing this task to make sure that learning has been successfully achieved by their sons or daughters.

Rethinking is the last step. It is felt that its importance comes from the fact that reconsidering one's mechanics, methods, steps followed, as the researcher has already done, permits one take a long view of what has been accomplished, whether accomplishments were satisfactory or a step was misapplied or alternatives were probable or essential. On the whole POWER teaching has potentially influenced students, and got them to work collaboratively, and think in new ways and eventually learn to learn. It has made a difference reflected on their test grades, though a grade is not an end by itself, it is still 'a natural reaction,' as stated by Feldman (2005:136).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The two approaches applied in this study revealed that the conventional one was not as effective as the POWER approach though it was faster, more direct and easier to carry out. Is the later better or does it produce more desired consequences? The answer is definitely positive since students acquired new strategies like working cooperatively, sharing in decision making, participating actively in solving problems which has ensured deep learning and good recall. One more thing, although students experience more anxiety over tests than over anything else in their college life, the test given to the students under the experiment showed that the new approach assisted to consolidate students' memory and eventually their learning was deeper and superior to the that of Class A.

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## التميز في تعليم اللغة

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#### ملخص البحث

ان الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو تطبيق بعض الاستراتيجيات المنظمة في تدريس اللغة الاجنبية على الرغم من الحقيقة القائلة انه لا توجد هناك طريقة واحدة لتدريس اللغة داخل الصف افضل من الاخرى. فاختيار طريقة ما يعتمد اساسا على المدرس والطلبة و المادة و الظروف. تبنت الدراسة استراتيجيات محددة قد تساعد مدرس اللغة الانكليزية في جودة ادائه و تطوره المهني . ولذا فهي تخص مدرسي اللغة ممن يدركون قيمة الاداء الجيد ويرغبون في تخريج طلبة اكفاء اكاديميا . و تساعد الدراسة ايضا طلبة الكليات ممن سيعملون في مهنة التدريس لاكتساب مهارات حديثة تساعدهم ليس فقط في النجاح بل و ايضا في التميز في تعلمهم وعلمهم المستقبلي.