

Self-Access Centres: As Desirable and Feasible Strategy for Fostering Student Independence

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Abstract - This research, conducted at a secondary institution in Basrah, Iraq, seeks to answer the questions of whether or not SACs are desirable plus feasible, and whether or not SACs can be established throughout the country. The principal focus of the present investigation is the establishment, in an intermediate school with one lecture hall, of a self-access centre stocked with technological resources and a wide range of educational resources suitable to learners of varying interests as well as abilities. The goal of this research is to investigate the efficacy of self-access centres (SACs) as a means for students to learn English and grow as self-sufficient educators by gauging their drive and curiosity in utilising SACs.

Keywords: SACs, Student Independence, Focused on Students, and Independent Study

I. INTRODUCTION

There has been a lot of discussion concerning self-access centres recently. This conversation has been bolstered by the proliferation of innovative educational technology and by notions related to the need of fostering independence among students. This has led to the proliferation of self-access centres across educational levels, most notably in higher education but additionally at intermediate and even elementary schools. Whenever considering the feasibility of opening a self-access centre, we have primarily focused on answering the query, "What sort of furnishings and amenities, and thus funding, would we require?" Do you think it will help those who attend our school? And if so, how exactly? Numerous variables, such as pupils' ages, academic levels, and intended outcomes, make it impossible to provide a single, definitive response (Daneshmand, 2017).

II. THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Student independence is a novel idea in Basrah, Iraq. The Iraqi government does not support the development of SACs that encourage student independence. The emphasis is on classroom instruction. Therefore, learners in Iraq possess no concept what SACs are nor how to utilise them. In addition, educators lack the background to effectively manage SACs. "learners desire to be regularly displayed not just to the concept of self-access learning but as well to the details of how it is unique and why," (Gardner & Miller, 1999) wrote. This is because, "in instances in which student independence along with self-access developing are entirely novel notions,

it might be challenging to persuade students to break beyond the conventional methods of learning with which they are familiar." (Vaezzade & Alinia, 2014; Faisal & Dharmaraj, 2024). Students can't possibly develop an acquaintance with self-access and independent study until they have some experience with it (Kang, 2024; Correa et al., 2024). It is believed that by participation in the SAC, learners would acquire the tools necessary to study a foreign tongue proficiently.

III. THE STUDY'S GOALS

The overarching goals of this research project are to:

1. Stock a basic self-access centre (a single the learning environment in an intermediate school) containing rudimentary technological gear alongside a wide range of resources.
2. To help students constitute acquaintance with it all and acquire the necessary competencies, you should introduce them to independent education and self-access centres.
3. Teach pupils how to take charge of their education and develop into independent graduates.
4. Motivate students to stop relying on teachers and start figuring things out on their own.
5. Encourage youngsters to make advantage of the SAC.

IV. HYPOTHESES

The use of Self-Access Centres is an effective strategy for fostering independence for learners alongside stimulating their curiosity in English language study.

V. METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in conducting this research. It may be tackled by thinking about how things really work in the real world. The gathering of information is essential to the qualitative method. Variables containing values that are numerical (such percentages or scores) may be easily categorized using the quantitative method. Twenty-four pupils from the second year of high

school will be selected by the scholar. There is an experimentation sample and a control sample made up of the pupils. Next, an initial assessment is given to the individuals receiving Standard English instruction while the cohort participating in the SAC is given the opportunity to study on their own time. After 10 weeks, both sets take a subsequent tests to see how much the group that underwent the experiment has improved their abilities because to the SAC. Through the assistance of a survey, we were able to gather both quantitative and qualitative information. Ten English instructors coming from various educational institutions in Basrah (Iraq) are given a survey to fill out so that we may understand more about their thoughts on the usefulness of self-access centres for EFL students and what they think of the resources available there.

VI. WHY WE'RE DOING THIS RESEARCH

The goal of this research is to find out why and how much learners care about using the SAC. It encourages individuals to put themselves in charge of their own education and develops in them the trust and ability to master a new language effectively. Additionally, it establishes an independent educational setting wherein learners have the option to take an active role in their education as opposed to merely obtaining instruction. Finding out whether and how self-access centres may help Iraqi students become more self-reliant is another goal of this research.

VII. THE RADIUS OF THE RESEARCH

This research makes a convincing argument for the usefulness and feasibility of Self-Access Centres in Iraq. As a result, it aids in improving the abilities of Iraqi pupils. In addition, it pushes students in Iraq towards becoming self-directed educators.

VIII. THE STUDY'S IMPORTANCE

Rather than allowing students to demonstrate initiative in their own education, English language instruction in Iraq is teacher-directed. The purpose of this research is to deliver a stimulating setting whereby Iraqi students may explore their drive as well as curiosity in utilising the SAC on their own terms and develop into self-directed learners. This research also aims to motivate individuals to pursue learning English in the SAC by creating conditions that promote and enhance native-like proficiency in the desired tongue.

IX. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

The idea of putting the focus squarely on the student is crucial to the success of both self-access as well as independence for learners. Littlewood, (1996), Anderson, (2003), Egbert & Hanson-Smith, (1999) all agree that the primary purpose of a student-focused approach to language instruction is to provide students with the abilities necessary for continued language development throughout their lives. Language instruction has evolved over the last 50 years to focus on the individual needs of every learner and encourage growth in both language and literacy skills.

X. SUBJECTS OF CONCERN

10.1. The Meaning of Learner Independence

Initially described by Holec, (1981) in terms of the "the capacity to be in charge of one's own learning," this conception of learner independence in language acquisition has been the most often quoted in recent years (Benson, 2009; Dang, 2010). The European Council of Europe's Contemporary Languages Initiative launched it in the first half of the 1980s, and its motivation comes from the philosophical idea of liberty and independence. 'Ability' and 'take command of' are sometimes rephrased as 'capacity' and 'take accountability for' in subsequent works (Holec, 1981). It seems that the meaning features of the concept are unaffected by these expression exchanges (Dang, 2010).

Holec, (1981) argued that this skill is not "inborn but must be learnt," with official educational practices being the primary means of this acquisition. Various political, interpersonal, and current contexts have led to varying understandings as well as implementations of, independence for learners (Dang, 2010). At the outset, (Wenden, 1991) said that it is often understood as the capacity to understand learning. Second, it is considered a capacity to regulate one's own educational pursuits, as mentioned by (Cotterall, 1995). Third, (Little, 1991) argued that it is perceived as a capacity for dissociation or learning, whereas (Dickinson, 1987) held that it was possible to acquire knowledge "without having the assistance of an instructor." Fourth, (Littlewood, 1996) presumed that it is a "ability to create and execute decisions. On the other hand, (Hunt et al., 1989) insist on the importance of being able to make well-informed choices about one's educational pursuits. Both (Bound, 1988; Smith & Ushioda, 2009) defined it as the capacity to provide replies above the bounds of standard operating procedure. A wide range of strategies for encouraging student independence follows naturally from these perspectives on the independence of learners (Al-Jizani & Kayabas, 2023). Consider also (Benson, 2009; Dang, 2010; Dang, 2012).

10.2. Self-Help Centre - An Explanation

A "Self-Access Facility" comprises an assortment of assets (in the manner of substances, tasks, alongside assistance), typically situated in a single location, as well intended for use by individuals with various stages, targets, methods, along with interests," suggest (Reinders & Cotterall, 2001). However, as Gardner & Miller, (1999) point out, "it is not merely the availability of self-access assets and amenities that constitute the components setting up the SAC, but additionally whether these contents are made available to the participants". They then went into great length explaining what kinds of tools and materials may be incorporated and the manner in which they need to be arranged. Benson, (2009) said that many schools create SACs "against no solid educational rationale," which is why it's important for a SAC to be founded on sound educational ideas.

XI. COLLECTING AND ANALYSING DATA

11.1. Overview

10 English professors have been summoned to a symposium with the sole aim of gathering information. During the seminar, the investigator introduces the study's goals, discusses how SACs may assist pupils understand English, demonstrates some of the resources accessible there as well as clarifies that SACs are crucial if scholars are to assume greater control over their education and develop into independent thinkers and doers. Instructors have been requested to observe pupils taking tests prior to and following the SAC to see whether or not there is a significant improvement as a result of the SAC. Following that, a survey is given to the educators to find about their thoughts on whether or not the self-access centres are worthwhile.

This primary part, data collecting, may be broken down into the following separate sections. In this part, we'll take a go at analysing the responses to the 10-question survey we sent to instructors.

11.2. The Sample

Twenty-four kids from a Baghdad school's second-year secondary class are taking part in this research. Twelve will be used in the research project, while the remaining twelve will serve as the group acting as a control. Additionally, 10 English instructors will be selected to fill out a survey.

11.3. Methods of Information Gathering

What follows are some of the tools used in the study's process:

1. Ten English instructors are given a survey to fill out. There are 10 multiple-choice inquiries containing predetermined answers.
2. Both evaluative and controlling groups take a set of tests before and after the intervention.

11.4. Efficacy of the Measurements

Professionals in English Language Teaching (ELT) from the College of Arts at Basrah University review preliminary versions of the survey sessions as well as exams in order to guarantee the reliability of the content.

11.4.1. Survey

The purpose of this survey is to get feedback from educators regarding the SAC's resources and amenities, as well as their thoughts on the SAC's attractiveness and effectiveness for teaching English.

11.5. The Impact of Professionals' Perceptions on Students

Based on the responses of the educators, we are certain that self-access centres may be successfully implemented in Iraq. The findings demonstrate that educators see the value of self-

access centres as a valuable tool for students' skill development and English language acquisition. The findings also show that SACs are preferable to traditional courses since they provide participants more freedom in their educational pursuits.

XII. RESULT & TEST EVALUATION

12.1. Overview

The investigator interviewed all 24 pupils who formed the population being studied for the purpose of this research. After that, twenty-four pupils are split evenly between a group participating in an experiment and a control set. The investigator now has the information they need to develop additional data collection tools, such as before and after tests, to investigate the students' capacity as independent thinkers and learners. The two groups, the experimenters and the controls, have both taken a preliminary assessment. Each group met once a week for an entire hour and a half for ten weeks to learn the four skills as well as grammar and pronunciation. The control group has been instructed in the standard oral-aural method, i.e. without the use of any technological devices. The experimental group, on the contrary hand, has access to gadgets, an MP3 player, a recording device, and a small library of books, newspapers, simple viewers, educational materials, activity spreadsheets, and language games for a total of 12 pupils. A follow-up exam is administered at the conclusion of the research to each group to see whether and what type of variations emerged among them. The findings of the information's evaluation are shown below.

12.2. Sources And Techniques

Means, standard deviations, and t-values are used to compare the results of the several cognitive assessments used in the research's statistical analysis. Computers and MP3 players, among other pieces of technology, have been employed in the trials. In addition, T-test examination was used in this research to distinguish across the control and experimental groups, respectively.

12.3. Results of the Tests Analysed

The analyst has begun administering initial and final tests to the study's experimental and control groups to ensure they are legitimate. The test subjects have been outfitted using a variety of equipment, including computers, an MP3 player, and a tape recorder. The untechnical method of instruction is used alongside the control group. Approximately ten weeks later, the researcher has given a follow-up test across both groups. Following is an examination of the prior to and afterwards outcomes:

12.3.1. Evaluation of the Preliminary Test's Questions

The following queries are part of the pre-test:

To answer question 1, you will see an online tutorial on the distinction between passive and active speech.

Follow along and convert the active voice phrases into the passive. You have fifteen minutes to respond to this inquiry. The purpose of this question is to evaluate students' grasp of grammar concepts presented through technological aids such as computers.

Question 2: In this video, you will learn how to properly pronounce the 'ed' at the end of English verbs that finish in /t/, /d/, and /id/. take notes on how various forms of 'ed' are pronounced. You have fifteen minutes to respond to this inquiry. This question comes from a computer-based course designed to assess students' grasp of the nuances involved in enunciating the '-ed' suffix at the end of some English verbs.

To answer question three, you will read an excerpt from Talith Lincham's "A Real Witch" that will be presented on the screen. Take your time reading the paragraph and marking the correct response. There is a 30-minute time limit on this response. The purpose of this inquiry is to assess the pupils' level of reading comprehension. The pupils' ability to interpret an electronic presentation of a lesson is also evaluated.

Question 4, MP3 contains eight phrases. You'll hear each statement multiple times.

Take notes on the spoken phrases while you attend. You have twenty minutes to respond to this inquiry. With this question, we want to test students' listening comprehension and proficiency by having them listen to recordings of native English speakers on devices like MP3 players.

Question 5; in a single paragraph, please describe your post-secondary goals. There is a 40-minute time limit on this response. The goal of this question is to assess the students' awareness of and control over common writing errors, such as those involving punctuation, sentence structure, and the organisation of ideas.

12.3.2. Evaluation of The Preliminary Test Data

There are five inquiries in this evaluation:

In this first question, you will be shown an online tutorial on the distinction between passive and active voice.

Follow along and convert the active voice phrases into the passive. You have fifteen minutes to respond to this inquiry.

Question 2: In this video, you will learn how to properly pronounce the 'ed' at the end of English verbs that finish in /t/, /d/, and /id/.

Take notes on how various forms of 'ed' are pronounced. You have fifteen minutes to respond to this inquiry.

To answer question three, you will read an excerpt from Talith Lincham's "A Real Witch" that will be presented on the screen. Read thoroughly the text and mark the correct answer on your test. You have thirty minutes to respond.

Answer to Question 4: The MP3 has eight phrases. You'll hear each statement repeatedly.

As you hear each phrase, note them down. You have 20 minutes to respond to this inquiry.

Question 5: In a single passage, please describe your ultimate career goal. You have forty minutes to respond to this inquiry.

The data visualisation below compares the preliminary test scores of students in the group participating in the experiment alongside the control group which is shown in table I:

TABLE I INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS FOR PRE-TEST SCORES OF EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS

Test Formats	X (Means)	Standard D.	T.Value	D.F
Exp.G. Pre-Test	22	7.90	0.908	11
Cnt.G. Pre-Test	21	7.10	0.651	11

As shown in Fig.1, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the preliminary test, with a mean score of 22 compared to 21.

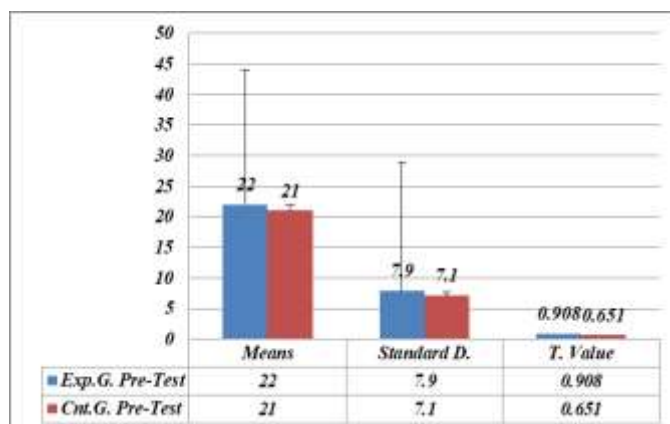


Fig. 1 Preliminary test scores for Experimental and Control Groups.

12.3.3. Evaluation of the Subsequent Test's Questions:

Learners having participated in the preliminary test are now participating in the subsequent test.

There will be a total of 5 questions in this assessment.

In this first question, you will learn the "English tenses" via an online video course. Take notes and then use a single instance to illustrate each tense. You have fifteen minutes to respond to this inquiry.

1. Present Simple Tense (P.S.T).
2. Past Continuous Tense (P.C.T).
3. Present Perfect Tense (P.P.T).
4. Present Perfect Continuous Tense (P.P.T.S).

The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether or not learners are able to use what they have learnt in grammar and make use of the information presented to them in the SAC.

Test your pronunciation skills with the second question. Follow the instructions. The time limit for this question is 15 minutes.

There are four elements to this inquiry:

- First, make sure you're transcribing every word correctly.
- Second, to indicate how the term chocolate is pronounced, utilise the signs below.
- Third, what is the sentence you need to transcribe?
- Forth, which word has a distinct pronunciation, and why should you circle it?

The purpose of assessment is to determine whether or not learners have benefited from the articulation alongside transcribing training provided through computer, MP3, and tape recorder in the SAC.

To answer question 3, you will now see an online instructional summary. It's titled "United Nations Children's Fund Pleads for Aid for Iraqi School-kids" and was written by The Voice of America Teaching English (TVOATE). After reading the summary, select the option that most accurately fulfills the assertion. There's a 30-minute time limit for seeing the summary and answering the questions. This is a reading comprehension quiz designed to gauge how well kids are doing. Learners' ability to comprehend what they read and how much they learn through reading resources like publications, simple readers, programmes, and videos viewed on computers are also evaluated.

In the fourth question, you will listen to 8 samples taken from the MP3. There will be two repetitions of each statement. Take notes on the sentences as you hear them by listening closely. You have 20 minutes to respond to this inquiry. The goal of this question is to assess how well foreign language learners can grasp how native English speakers pronounce common phrases and sentences. It also evaluates the learners' listening abilities and the extent to which they have improved their listening comprehension using the SAC's materials.

For question 5, please describe your aspirations in single passage. There is a 40-minute time limit on this response. The goal of this question is to assess whether or not students have retained important information on the SAC and to gauge the extent to which they have been able to develop their writing skills as a result.

12.3.4. Evaluation of the Subsequent Test's Data

There are 5 inquiries in this assessment.

In this first question, you will be exposed to an online English tenses tutorial. Take notes afterwards use a single instance to

illustrate each tense. The time limit for this question is 15 minutes.

1. Present Simple Tense (P.S.T).
2. Past Continuous Tense (P.C.T).
3. Present Perfect Tense (P.P.T).
4. Present Perfect Continuous Tense (P.P.T.S).

The second question is a pronunciation test. Follow the rules. The time limit for this question is 15 minutes.

The answer to this question consists of 4 components:

1. Adjacent to every single word, type the proper phonetic transcription.
2. To indicate how the term chocolate is pronounced, utilise the signs below.
3. Copy the exact sentence from the phonetic transcription.
4. Which word has a distinct pronunciation, and why should you highlight it?

In this third question, you will be seeing a computer-generated instructional report. United Nations Children's Fund Pleads for Aid for Iraqi School-kids" and was written by The Voice of America Teaching English (TVOATE). After reading the document, select the option that most accurately fulfils the assertion. The summary and your replies must be recorded within the allotted time of 30 minutes.

Question 4: The MP3 will play 8 lines. There will be two repetitions of each statement. Take notes on the sentences as you hear them by listening carefully. You have twenty minutes to respond to this inquiry.

Question 5: In a single passage, please describe your long-term objective(s). There is a 40-minute time limit on this response.

Participants' subsequent tests scores are shown in Table II.

TABLE II INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS FOR SUBSEQUENT TEST SCORES OF EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS

Test Formats	X (Means)	Standard D.	T.Value	D.F
Exp.G. Sub.Test	33	5,79	2.465	11
Cnt.G. Sub.Test	23	6,74	0.995	11

Fig. 2, illustrates a more significant improvement in the experimental group's post-test results, confirming the positive effect of SACs.

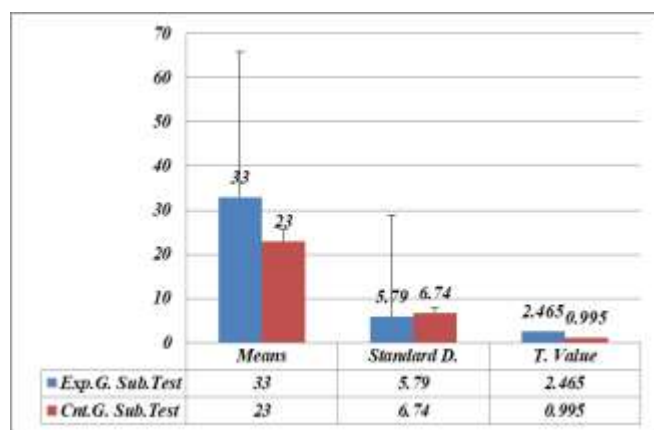


Fig. 2 Post-Test Scores Showing Impact of Sac Implementation.

Analysis of the Differences Between the First and Second Tests

This table displays the results of the beforehand and post-tests which is shown in table III:

TABLE III COMPARISON OF PRE-TEST AND SUBSEQUENT TEST SCORES BETWEEN EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS

Test Formats	X (Means)	Standard D.	T.Value
Exp.G. Pre-Test	22	7.90	0.908
Cnt.G. Pre-Test	21	7.10	0.651
Exp.G. Sub-Test	33	5.79	2.465
Cnt.G. Sub-Test	23	6.74	0.995

Fig. 3, provides a visual summary of the performance trend, clearly highlighting the effectiveness of the SAC approach over time.

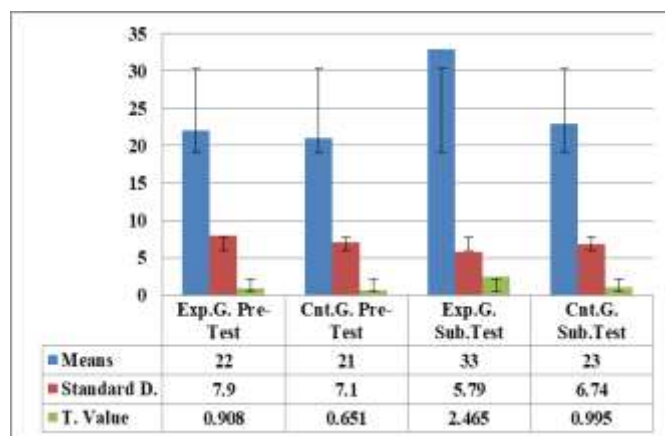


Fig. 3 Comparative Analysis of Pre- and Post-Test Outcomes

- $DF = (N-1) = (12-1) = 11$

Standard D. of the differences among:

$$\text{Exp.G. Pre-Test} - \text{Cnt.G. Pre-Test} = 22 - 19 = 03$$

$$\text{Exp.G. Sub-Test} - \text{Cnt.G. Sub-Test} = 33 - 23 = 10$$

A significant t-value indicates that the Exp.G. means are greater than the Cnt.G. means. Due to its lower significance, Cnt.G. has an adverse t-value. This table illustrates the difference between an experimental group test and a

controlled group test. When looking at the standard deviations of the Exp.G. and Cnt.G. preliminary tests, it is evident that the Exp.G. the preliminary test outcomes are superior than the Cnt.G. the preliminary test findings (6,68, 6,90). On the other hand, the subsequent tests scores of the Exp.G. students are 33 (Means) and the Cnt.G. students are 23 (Means). Participants in the Exp.G., performed better on the follow-up assessment than their counterparts in the Cnt.G. This demonstrates the usefulness and appeal of SAC, particularly in a densely populated area like Basrah, Iraq, where it is used by learners. That's great news for Iraqi scholars studying English as a foreign language, and it should provide Iraqi instructors the confidence they need to implement changes to the way they teach the language that will help individuals become more independent in areas like pronunciation, vocabulary, along with syntax. The findings of both the initial and subsequent tests show a clear trend favouring setting up SACs in Iraqi urban settings, which should motivate other institutional administrators to expand the reach of programmes like these at Iraqi universities and colleges. This would further encourage Iraqi students in elementary and secondary institutions to become more independent and self-reliant.

XIII. CONCLUSION & FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

13.1. Conclusion

This research looks at whether or not learners would be interested in utilising a self-access centre as an extension of course instruction. It additionally seeks to ascertain whether or whether the knowledge gained at the SAC helps learners improve their language training possibilities and equips them with the self-taught abilities necessary to keep up with their language studies even after their official education has ended. The results of both the preliminary and final tests show that the experimental group fared better than the control group. The experimental group is different from the control group because it has been provided the opportunity to engage freely and has utilised the resources and technological apparatus available within the self-access centre.

The study's author concludes that student usage of the self-access centre boosts their motivation to study English and empowers them to take charge of their own education. The primary goal of the self-access centre is, without any question, to provide students with the tools they need to take charge of their own education and improve as proficient language learners. Instructors' replies guarantee that learners will be capable to successfully navigate the self-access centre as well as assume control of their education. The instructors' comments further demonstrate that the self-access centre is an effective tool for aptitude acquisition when compared to the traditional classroom. Researchers in Iraq may conclude that SACs constitute a realistic and desired option for fostering student independence and those students are capable of and motivated to utilise them to improve their English language skills. Thus, the findings supported our working theory.

13.2. Further Suggestions

The results of this research suggest that the Iraqi Ministry of Education ought to put forth an effort to enhance the methods through which Iraqi learners acquire English. In order to learn to think for themselves, children must be exposed to and use English in contexts other than the classroom. They, too, must acquire these abilities to assert control of their own education. The Division of Education is expected make every effort to provide the resources necessary for pupils to improve their English skills each week. Self-access centres stocked with materials and technological devices suitable for learners of varying ages and interests should be established at educational facilities.

Educating without direct instruction is the major goal of such (self-access study) services. Self-access resources allow learners to select as well as utilise resources at their personal pace, and sometimes include built-in feedback on how well they're doing. Individuals may take charge of their education when given the opportunity to use this kind of self-access resource. Instructor education programmes ought to incorporate instruction in the utilisation of technology, asset allocation based on individual dire straits, SAC management, and counselling skills.

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