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Difficulties of Teaching New English Communicative Syllabuses by Iraqi Teachers.

A B S T R A C T

During the last nine years of this century, radical changes in TEFL have taken place all over Iraqi schools. There has been a shift of emphasis from linguistic competence to communicative competence, from frontal teaching to group work, from form to meaning, and from accuracy to fluency, i.e. there has been a move back from teaching grammar for its own sake. If grammar is to be taught, it has to be used in everyday communication.

Therefore, this research has been talked to shed the light on the areas of difficulty. Iraqi teachers may face in teaching these new communicative syllabuses. It also aims at identifying and classifying these difficulties.

To fulfill this aim, a sample of 100 teachers of English at an Intermediate schools in Tikrit Governorate are considered to be the subjects of this research.

A scaled questionnaire as an instrument of measurement is used in this research to be an investigatory tool.

The results of this research proves that the hypothesis of this study is verified and accepted which reads that Iraqi teachers of English face difficulties in teaching communicative English syllabuses.

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الصعوبات في تدريس مناهج اللغة الانكليزية التواصلية الحديثة لمدرسي العراق

م.م. انتصار فاضل طه / المديرية العامة للتربية في صلاح الدين

الخلاصة:

خلال السنوات التسع الماضية من القرن المنصرم , حدث تغيير جذري في تدريس اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية في المدارس العراقية حيث اصبح هناك تحول في الاهمية من المقدرة اللغوية الى التواصلية ومن التدريس التقليدي الى العمل الجماعي ومن الشكل الى المضمون ومن الدقة الى الطلاقة , وهذا يعني , عودة الى الوراء من تدريس النحو لأهميته الى تدريسه لأجل استخدامه في التواصل في الحياة اليومية. لذلك القى هذا البحث الضوء على نواحي الصعوبة التي ربما يعاني منها المعلم العراقي في تدريس مناهج

اللغة الانكليزية التواصلية الجديدة ويهدف ايضا الى تعريف وتصنيف تلك الصعوبات. لتحقيق هذا الهدف , اعتمدت الباحثة عينة مكونة من ١٠٠ معلم ومدرس في المدارس الثانوية في مديرية التربية في محافظة صلاح الدين لتكون عينة البحث. استخدمت الباحثة الاستبيان المدرج كوسيلة بحثية وإحصائية في هذا البحث. اظهرت النتائج ان فرضية البحث قد اثبتت وتم قبولها والتي تنص على " ان المعلمين العراقيين يواجهون صعوبات في تدريس مناهج اللغة الانكليزية التواصلية ."

Introduction

1.1 The Problem and its Significance

English as a school subject is granted the same value and prestige as the mother tongue. Its teaching has always been concerned with developing the pupils ability to communicate. It aims at making learners understand and use the language in its spoken and written forms within a particular cultural context, and to built up he pupils communicative competence so that they can use it in their future life (Al-Mutawa and Al- Kailani, 1989:5). They clarify that the pupils learn from the beginning that language is communication, that is something to be used. The implication of this is that we are more concerned with what people do with language than with what they know of it. In other sense, this communicative methodology tries to gear language teaching to the rules we need for communicating appropriately in social situations rather than to the grammatical rules we need for producing correct sentences (ibid.: 22).

Nowadays, the need for the change of English syllabuses and reshape others become more acute due to the clear development in all life sides. The intended change must depend on interaction between speakers and provide communicative functions that reflect real life use of language. In Iraq, the Ministry of Education has developed new English courses called " English for Iraq" begin from first primary which is the first level of a ten levels course of young Iraqi learners of English. This new syllabuses supposed to meet the pupils needs and demands and incorporates recent development in the knowledge about the pedagogy of language. Nunan (2001: 69) states that challenge now is not to throw out well- established practices, as so often happened in the past, but to incorporate new ways of doing things into existing practice. In this sense, change will be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

Depending on the communicative approach, the teacher and students must engaged in real life contexts and communicative situations that express their real need and wishes. In Iraq, the reality that put itself in such situation is that Iraqi teachers working with limited resources in addition to many areas of difficulty they may face.

Relating to the same point, Brown(2007: 242) clarifies that it is difficult for non- native speaking teachers who is not very proficient in the second language to teach language communicatively and students don't have sufficient organizational competence, illocutional competence and strategic competence to accomplish a task.

So this research is meant to provide a clear picture about the areas of difficulty the teachers may face in teaching new communicative syllabuses and it tries to answer the following question:

Which aspect of their teaching practice do the teachers find most challenge?

1.2 Aims of the Study

The present study aims at identifying and classifying the difficulties Iraqi teachers may face in teaching new communicative syllabuses.

1.3 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to :

1. Communicative syllabuses that used in Iraqi schools (An Intermediate schools).
2. Teachers of English in Tikrit Directorates of Education.

1.4 The Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that Iraqi teachers face difficulties in teaching new communicative syllabuses.

1.5 Procedures

To achieve the aim of the present study, the following procedures will be adopted by the researcher to collect data:

1. Choosing a number of teachers from Tikrit Directorates of Education randomly to represent the study sample.

2. Preparing an elicitation tool , rating scales questionnaire.
3. Interpreting the results in the light of the hypothesis by using the proper statistical means that suit the study.

1.6 Value of the Study

1. This study is expected to be valuable for Iraqi teachers who will benefit from its details about new aspects that may cause difficulties to find the possible solutions in the light of the recommendation that will be written in this research.
2. It is going to provide feedback about the new textbook.

1.7 Definitions of the Basic Terms

- Difficulty: A difficulty is a problem; a thing or situation that causes problems. However, in this study it refers to some obstacles facing the English teachers in teaching literature. (Oxford Dictionary, 2000). Difficulty is a thing hard to be done or overcome, something that causes labor or perplexity and requires skill and perseverance in mastering, solving or achieving a hard enterprise (Webster, 1976:630).

-Teacher: a person whose job is to teach, especially in a school or college (Oxford Word Power, 2006:712).

-Communicative Syllabus: it is a syllabus that provides an ideal for identifying and selecting the syllabus content relevant to needs of different types of foreign- language learner (Munby, 1978:1).

2.Theoretical Background

2.1 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a broad approach to teaching that resulted from a focus on communication as the organizing principle for teaching rather than a focus on mastery of the grammatical system of the language. This approach to language teaching emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s as a replacement for the structural- situational and audiolingual methods. CLT was not so much a change in method as a set of changes in assumptions about the nature of language, the nature of goals, objectives, and the syllabus in language teaching, and a search for an

appropriate methodology in the light of these changes. CLT was a response to changes in the field of linguistics in the 1970s, as well as a response to the need for new approaches to language teaching in Europe as a result of initiative, by groups such as the council of Europe. Linguistics moved away from a focus on grammar as the core of component of language abilities to a consideration of how language is used by speakers in different contexts of communication (Richards, 2001:36).

It is an approach to foreign or second language teaching which emphasizes that the goal of language learning is communicative competence and which seeks to make meaningful communication and language use a focus of all classroom activities (Richard and Schmidt, 2002:90).

One of the central ideas in the communicative approach is the distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence. Communicative language teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the communicative approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication (Freeman, 2003:121).

The most obvious characteristic of CLT is that almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent. Students use the language a great deal through communicative activities such as games, role-plays, and problem- solving tasks (ibid,: 129).

2.2 Notional- Functional Syllabus

Notional- functional syllabus, as the most recent type of syllabus, during the last three decades of the previous century. The first step in designing this type is to specify the learners' needs (Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983: 47). Yalden (1983:41) states that

the linguistic items are not to be taught first. Units are arranged around meaning of the functions that language serves rather than around grammatical items .

Notional- functional syllabus began to grow in popularity in the United Kingdom in the 1070s. The distinguishing characteristic of the notional-functional syllabus is its attention to functions as the organizing elements of a foreign language curriculum. Grammar is attended to only in that it explains the various forms used to accomplish certain functions (Brown, 1994:246).

A typical unit in this textbook includes presentation of dialogues, conversation practice with classmate, situations in which the students figures out " what would I say ?", role- plays, chart work, multiple choice exercises on functional considerations, one- sided dialogs in which the student fills in responses, nonverbal considerations, discussion activities, and community exercises for extra class practice.(ibid,: 247) .

2.3 Essentials of Communicative Approach

2.3.1 Communicative Competence

Savignon (1983: 9) clarifies that communicative competence is relative not absolute and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved. It is not so much an interpersonal construct as we saw in Chomsky's early writings but rather a dynamic, interpersonal construct that can only be examined by means of overt performance of two or more individuals in the process of negotiating meaning.

Communicative Competence is that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally with in specific contexts (Brown, 1994: 227).

Communicative Competence then is not only the ability to use grammatically correct sentences or utterances, but also to know when and where to use these utterances and to whom. It requires Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the language, Knowledge of rules of speaking , how to begin and end conversation , knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts such as request, apologies, thanks,.....et; recognizing the social settings; the relation with other persons and the types of language that can be used for a particular occasions. (Richards, J.C. & Schmidt, R. 2002: 65).

2.3.2 Group- Work

Al- Helaly (1987: 49) states that in group- work , the classroom should be large and suitable for teaching English as a foreign language. It should be supplied with special furniture such as light, desks and chairs that can be easily arranged for individual or group- work. This necessitates the use of separate classroom for teaching English.

Group- work as Richards and Schmidt (2002: 80) said is a learning activity which involves a small group of learners working together. The group may

work on a single task, or on different parts of a larger task. Tasks of group members are often selected by the members of the group. They stated that there are different group arrangements for teaching, include:

1. Whole – group instruction: the class is taught as a whole.
2. Small- group discussion: A group of between six and eight students working on a discussion topic.
3. Tutorial discussion group: A small group of usually less than five students focusing on a narrow range of materials, often to help remedy a learning difficulty.

Group- work is the key element or an integrate part of the communicative methodology. The size of the groups usually ranges from three to eight pupils. This process provide a good chance for the negotiation among pupils.

The success of communicative activities depends on the organization of group- work. Groups may be selected randomly or on certain bases. The latter , requires prior knowledge of the pupils linguistic abilities by the teacher in order to distinguish the good pupils over the groups.(ibid).

3.Procedures

3.1 Population and Sample

3.1.1 Population

Population is a group of individuals with at least one common characteristic which distinguishes that group from other individuals (Best and Kahn, 2006:13).While Creswell (2012: 142) defines population as “a group of individuals who have the same characteristics”.

The population of this study comprises the teachers at the Intermediate stages in General Directorate of Education in Tikrit Governorate. The choice is intentional in the selection of the Directorate of Education in Tikrit Governorate. In Tikrit governorate schools, the teachers were expected to have taught the new syllabuses under investigation at the rate of five lessons a week.

3.1.2 Sample

A Sample is derived from population. According to Brown (2001:72). Sample is a subgroup of individuals representing population. The logic of using

a sample of subjects is to make interference about some larger population from a smaller one (a sample) (Berg, 2004: 34).

Hanlon and Larget (2011:2) state that sample is the specific group of individuals representing population, so there is available data for individuals.

The size of the whole population of the present study is too large. It is not easy for the researcher to take all the teachers of English in the study because that will take too much time. It is random in the selection of a representative number of 100 teachers from the subdirectories of Al- Zuhoor/ Tikrit province and Al- Sapha.

The sample of the research consists of Intermediate schools distributed between Al- Zuhoor / Tikrit and Al- Sapha Provence (50 teachers for each).

Twenty teachers have been randomly chosen for the participation in the pilot study. The participants in the pilot study were excluded from the sample of the final administration of the questionnaire. The sample of the teachers consists of 100 teachers of English.

3.1 Instrument of the Study

To achieve the aim and verify the hypothesis , a questionnaire was constructed by the researcher , as shown in table (1). At first , the researcher construct an open questionnaire contained the following open question: " What are the main difficulties that face you in teaching the new English communicative syllabuses?". The researcher distribute this open question to a sample of twenty teachers. After analyzing the results obtained from the open questionnaire , the researcher construct the closed questionnaire and considered it as the main instrument of the present study. It is consists of 15 items . These items supposed to conclude teachers' difficulties by three rating scales; I agree, I partially agree, I disagree. The items represent the most important difficulties in teaching new communicative syllabuses from the points of view of the teachers. The type of questionnaire that used in this research is rating scales questionnaire.

In this scale , people can show how strongly they agree or disagree with the items of the questionnaire, i.e, there is a graduation in attitu Table (1) questionnaire items

No	Items	I agree	I partially agree	I disagree
1	Teaching language for communicative purposes requires the teachers to incorporate new methodologies.			
2	Teachers don't have sufficient time to manage communicative classroom activities.			
3	Most Iraqi students who are used to traditional teacher- centered classroom have not been expected to take responsibility in the teaching process.			
4	It is difficult for most teachers to assess students performance as they should adopt new forms of informal or authentic assessment.			
5	Non- native speaking teachers face difficulties in teaching grammatical rules communicatively.			
6	It is not easy to engage students in the authentic, pragmatic and functional use of language.			
7	It is rather a hard task to make students able to present spontaneity in communicative classes .			
8	It is difficult for most teachers to plan well structured lesson.			
9	Contending with dialogue , rehearsed exercise drills and discussions demands certain technologies.			
10	The use of authentic materials may cause a burden for the teacher in respect to structures , functions content and length.			
11	Iraqi teachers' abilities are not suitable to the			

	teaching of the intended syllabuses.			
12	It is a difficult task to develop and assess language skills holistically .			
13	Teachers tend to emphasize wrong and right questions and not focus on communication.			
14	The focus on fluency not accuracy may cause anxiety among teachers accustomed to seeing error suppression and correction as the major instructional responsibility.			
15	Teaching communicative syllabuses demands a supportive classroom environment in which the students can be engaged in role- play , pair and group work.			

Which of these aspects of your teaching practice do you find most challenging especially with new English communicative syllabuses?

3.2 Face Validity

Face validity refers to the way the test looks to the examinees, supervisors or in general to the people concerned with the education of the students (Al-Jubouri, 2000: 23). McNamara,(2000: 48) states that the purpose of validation in language testing is to ensure the defensibility and fairness of interpretation based on test performance .

To ensure face validity, the questionnaire was exposed to a jury of experts* in the field of English language. They are especially required to determine the suitability of the questionnaire items to the sample of the study, and to propose and make any necessary suggestions for modifications, deletion or addition that enrich and sharpen the test. The jury have agreed that the test and the procedures are suitable except for some modifications which have been taken into consideration.

Pilot Administration

Before conducting the final administration , it is highly preferred to run a pilot administration and to revise the instrument of the study according to the results obtained from this administration. Pilot study as stated by Tuckman (1972: 197) is attempt to determine whether the test items pass the desired qualities of measurement and discriminability.

The aim of the pilot study are to find out the clarity of the questionnaire instruction. In order to conduct a pilot study, twenty teachers of English were chosen randomly from the Directorate of Education in Tikrit.

The findings of the pilot administration reveal the following:

1. The teachers are able to answer all the questionnaire items.
2. There is no serious ambiguity in the instructions of the questionnaire.
3. Teachers seem motivated to discuss their difficulties with the researcher.

3.5 Final Administration of the Questionnaire

The final version of the questionnaire was distributed to the subjects at the beginning of October, 2021.

The teachers were asked to give their views regards the items according to scale of three dimensions , finally, the teachers' responses have been utilized by the researcher.

3.6 Overall Performance

In order to investigate the hypothesis of the study which reads " Iraqi teachers face difficulties in teaching new communicative syllabuses". The responses of the subjects were investigated by using the mean and theoretical mean formula. The mean score of the subjects was (48.725) compared with the theoretical mean (30).

This result indicate that the mean is higher than the theoretical mean. This proves that Iraqi teachers of English face difficulties in

teaching new communicative syllabuses. Accordingly, the hypothesis that mentioned above is verified and accepted.

Item No.	I agree	I partially agree	I disagree	The weighted mean.
1	70	13	17	70%
2	80	10	10	80%
3	40	20	40	40%
4	69	16	15	69%
5	72	11	17	72%
6	29	32	39	29%
7	30	25	45	30%
8	55	23	22	55%
9	65	22	13	65%
10	75	15	10	75%
11	40	20	40	40%
12	38	32	30	38%
13	60	27	13	60%
14	63	20	18	63%
15	28	28	44	28%

4. Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestion for Further Studies

1.1 Conclusions

After presenting the difficulties faced by Iraqi teachers of English in teaching communicative syllabuses throughout the procedures of this study, the researchers considered the weight mean of the items that ranges from (80% to 60%) as difficult topics. Consequently , seven items were considered to be difficult as it is shown clearly in table (2). Conclusion remarks can be pointed out as follows:

1. Item number (5) which reads " Non- native speaking teachers face difficulties in teaching grammatical rules communicatively" constitutes the most difficult item for teachers.It got a weighted mean (80%).
2. Item number (12) which reads " It is a difficult task to develop and assess language skills holistically" constitutes the second difficulty for teachers. It got a weighted mean (75%).
3. Item number (9) which reads " Contending with dialogue , rehearsed excercies drills and discussions demands providing certain technology" constitutes the third difficulty for teachers. It got a weighted mean (72%).
4. Item number (2) which reads " Teachers don't have sufficient time to manage the communicative classroom activities" constitutes the fourth difficulty for teachers. It got a weighted mean (70%).
5. Item number (7) which reads " It is rather a hard task to make students able to present spontaneity in communicative classes" constitutes the fifth difficulty for teachers. It got a weighted mean (65%).
6. Items number (3) which reads " Most Iraqi students who are used to traditional teacher- centered classroom have not been expected to take responsibility in the teaching process"

constitutes the sixth difficulty for teachers. It got a weighted mean (63%).

7. Item number (4) which reads " It is difficult for most teachers to assess students performance as they should adopt new forms of informal or authentic assessment" is the seventh difficulty for teachers. Its weighted mean is (63%).
8. Item number (15) which reads " Teaching communicative syllabuses demands a supportive classroom environment in which the students can be engaged in role- play, pair and group work " is the eighth difficulty for teachers. Its weighted mean is (60%).

1.2 Pedagogical Implications and Recommendation

In the light of the findings achieved and conclusions derived , the following pedagogical implications and recommendations are drawn:

1. Teachers are recommended to keep focus on incorporating authentic material in the learning process and in particular audiovisual component. Such material can create a learning environment that is rich in linguistic and cultural information and allow teachers and students to explore the non- verbal, intonation, gesture, mime, facial expression and so on.
2. Communicative language teaching needs applying different activities. Accordingly, teachers need to be experiment with a variety of instructional methods. A good way of learning activities and techniques is to keep up-to- date through reading the various teachers' magazines, books and websites that contain good description of activities.
3. Achieving an ideal atmosphere for teaching communicative syllabuses need time , supportive classroom environment , providing certain technologies ,i.e. schools should be provided with technical equipment in order to simplify the teaching process and implement the new course

successfully.

4.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

1. A similar study is needed to investigate the difficulties faced by Iraqi students in learning communicative syllabuses.
2. A study may be carried out to assess the new communicative syllabuses according to the teachers' professional qualifications.

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