

Iraqi EFL University Students and the Communicative Approach

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ABSTRACT

The communicative approach, also known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), has become one of the most influential approaches in English language teaching worldwide. In Iraq, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students often face difficulties in developing communicative competence despite years of studying English. Traditional teaching methods focusing on grammar translation and memorization continue to dominate many Iraqi classrooms, limiting students' opportunities for authentic communication. This research examines the communicative approach and its impact on Iraqi EFL university students. It discusses the historical development of CLT, its principles, characteristics, classroom activities, advantages, challenges, and its implementation in Iraqi universities. Furthermore, the study highlights communicative competence, student motivation, classroom interaction, and the role of teachers within communicative classrooms. The paper also reviews recent Iraqi and international studies related to communicative language teaching and Iraqi EFL learners. The findings indicate that the communicative approach positively affects students' speaking abilities, interaction, confidence, motivation, and language proficiency. However, several obstacles hinder effective implementation, including overcrowded classrooms, limited teacher training, lack of resources, examination systems, and students' anxiety. The study concludes with pedagogical recommendations for improving communicative teaching practices in Iraqi universities.

KEYWORDS: Iraqi EFL university students, communicative approach, communicative competence, CLT, English language teaching, Iraqi universities.

1. Introduction:

English language teaching has witnessed remarkable changes during the last decades. Traditional methods that focused mainly on grammar rules and memorization have gradually been replaced by learner-centered approaches emphasizing communication and interaction. Among these approaches, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as one of the most influential methods in language education.

The communicative approach focuses on enabling learners to use language effectively in real-life situations. Rather than concentrating solely on grammatical accuracy, CLT encourages meaningful interaction, fluency, and authentic communication. Learners are expected to participate actively in classroom discussions, role plays, pair work, and problem-solving tasks.

In Iraq, English is taught as a foreign language from early educational stages up to university level. Despite years of learning English, many Iraqi EFL university students still face serious difficulties in speaking and communicating effectively. This problem can be attributed to several factors such as reliance on traditional teaching methods, limited exposure to English outside classrooms, anxiety, and lack of communicative activities.

Recently, sssssIraqi researchers and educators have become increasingly interested in implementing communicative approaches in university classrooms to improve students' communicative competence and language proficiency. Studies have shown that Iraqi EFL learners benefit greatly from communicative instruction and interactive learning environments.

This paper investigates the communicative approach and its impact on Iraqi EFL university students. It explores theoretical foundations, classroom implementation, challenges, and recent empirical studies related to communicative teaching in Iraq.

2. The Concept of the Communicative Approach

The communicative approach refers to a method of language teaching that emphasizes communication as both the goal and the means of learning a language. It emerged in the 1970s as a reaction against traditional methods such as the Grammar Translation Method and the Audiolingual Method.

The main objective of CLT is the development of communicative competence, which means the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. Learners should be able to express opinions, ask questions, negotiate meaning, and interact naturally with others.

According to communicative theorists, language is primarily a tool for communication rather than merely a system of grammatical structures. Therefore, classrooms should simulate real-life communication situations.

Major characteristics of CLT include:

Learner-centered instruction

Use of authentic materials

Focus on fluency and meaning

Pair work and group work

Task-based activities

Integration of language skills

Teacher as facilitator rather than lecturer

3. Historical Development of Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as a major innovation in language education during the late 1960s and early 1970s in Europe. Its development was largely a response to the limitations of earlier language teaching methods, especially the Grammar-Translation Method and the Audiolingual Method. These traditional approaches focused mainly on memorization, grammatical rules, sentence drills, and translation exercises, while paying little attention to the learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations. As international communication increased after World War II, educators and linguists recognized the need for a more practical approach that would prepare learners to use language meaningfully and appropriately in social contexts.

One of the most influential scholars in the development of CLT was Dell Hymes, who criticized the idea proposed by earlier linguists that language learning should focus only on grammatical knowledge. Hymes argued that knowing a language involves much more than understanding grammar and vocabulary. According to him, learners must also understand how to use language appropriately depending on the

situation, the participants, and the cultural context. To explain this idea, Hymes introduced the concept of *communicative competence*. This concept emphasized that effective communication requires both linguistic knowledge and social understanding. In other words, learners should know not only what is grammatically correct, but also what is socially acceptable and meaningful in real communication.

Later, linguists Michael Canale and Merrill Swain further developed Hymes' theory by identifying four major components of communicative competence. The first component is **grammatical competence**, which refers to the learner's knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure. The second component is **sociolinguistic competence**, which involves understanding how language use changes according to social situations, relationships, and cultural norms. The third component is **discourse competence**, which refers to the ability to connect sentences and ideas coherently in spoken or written communication. The fourth component is **strategic competence**, which includes the use of communication strategies such as paraphrasing, repetition, or gestures to overcome difficulties during interaction.

The rise of CLT was also influenced by developments in sociolinguistics, functional linguistics, and educational psychology. Linguists such as M. A. K. Halliday emphasized the functional nature of language and argued that language is primarily used to express meaning and achieve communication purposes. Consequently, language teaching shifted from focusing solely on grammatical accuracy to promoting fluency, interaction, and meaningful communication. Classroom activities in CLT therefore began to include role plays, pair work, group discussions, interviews, problem-solving tasks, and real-life communication activities that encourage learners to actively use the target language.

The communicative approach gained rapid international acceptance because it addressed learners' practical communication needs more effectively than traditional methods. Teachers and curriculum designers found that students became more motivated and confident when they used language for authentic communication rather than simple memorization. Today, Communicative Language Teaching remains one of the most influential and widely adopted approaches in English language teaching around the world. It continues to shape modern language curricula, textbooks, classroom practices, and teacher training programs, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as Iraqi universities.

4. Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is considered the core principle of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It refers to the learner's ability to use language accurately, fluently, and appropriately in real-life communication situations. Unlike traditional approaches that focus mainly on grammar, communicative competence emphasizes meaningful interaction and the practical use of language in social contexts. According to Dell Hymes, successful language learning requires not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language effectively according to different communicative situations.

4.1 Grammatical Competence

Grammatical competence refers to the learner's knowledge of the linguistic system of a language. It includes understanding vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, grammar rules, sentence formation, and word order. Learners with strong grammatical competence are able to produce grammatically correct sentences in both spoken and written communication. This competence forms the foundation for effective language use because communication cannot occur successfully without adequate control of grammatical structures.

4.2 Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to social and cultural contexts. It involves understanding how factors such as age, status, relationship, setting, and culture influence language use. For example, the language used when speaking to a teacher differs from the language used with close friends. This competence helps learners avoid inappropriate expressions and enables them to communicate politely and effectively in different social situations.

4.3 Discourse Competence

Discourse competence is the ability to connect sentences and ideas coherently in order to produce meaningful spoken or written texts. It enables learners to organize their ideas logically and maintain unity and coherence during communication. This competence includes the use of connectors, transitions, references, and cohesive devices that help create smooth communication. Learners with good discourse competence can participate effectively in conversations, write organized paragraphs, and understand longer texts more easily.

4.4 Strategic Competence

Strategic competence refers to the use of communication strategies to overcome language difficulties or communication breakdowns. Learners may use paraphrasing, repetition, gestures, synonyms, or requests for clarification when they cannot express themselves directly. This competence is especially important for EFL learners because they may not always possess complete linguistic knowledge. Strategic competence therefore helps learners maintain communication and increases their confidence during interaction.

Research on Iraqi EFL learners shows that many university students possess acceptable grammatical knowledge but still experience weakness in communicative competence. Although students may understand grammar rules and perform well in written examinations, they often face difficulties in speaking fluently, participating in discussions, and using English naturally in authentic situations. This problem is commonly attributed to limited exposure to real communicative practice, teacher-centered instruction, and excessive emphasis on memorization and grammar-focused teaching methods in many educational contexts.

5. Iraqi EFL University Students

Iraqi EFL university students study English in departments of English language, colleges of education, and other university programs. Many students aim to become teachers, translators, or professionals who use English in academic and professional settings.

However, Iraqi learners face numerous challenges in learning English communicatively. These include:

Limited exposure to English outside classrooms

Dependence on traditional teaching methods

Fear of making mistakes

Lack of confidence

Large class sizes

Examination-oriented education

Insufficient speaking practice

Studies show that Iraqi university students often demonstrate weak communicative and pragmatic competence.

6. Importance of the Communicative Approach for Iraqi EFL Students

The communicative approach is highly important for Iraqi EFL university students because it helps learners use English effectively in practical and meaningful situations. In many Iraqi educational contexts, students often study grammar and vocabulary extensively but experience difficulties when communicating orally in English. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) attempts to solve this problem by creating interactive learning environments that encourage students to participate actively in communication. Through communicative activities, learners develop linguistic, social, and academic skills necessary for successful communication in both educational and professional settings.

6.1 Improving Speaking Skills

One of the most important advantages of CLT is its focus on improving students' speaking abilities. Traditional teaching methods usually emphasize memorization and written exercises, while communicative teaching provides learners with opportunities to speak English actively inside the classroom. Activities such as pair work, role plays, discussions, and oral presentations encourage students to practice speaking frequently and naturally. As a result, Iraqi EFL learners gradually improve their pronunciation, fluency, and ability to express ideas confidently in English.

6.2 Increasing Student Motivation

Communicative activities make the classroom environment more interactive, enjoyable, and learner-friendly. Instead of remaining passive listeners, students become active participants in classroom tasks and discussions. This active involvement increases learners' motivation and interest in learning English because they can see the practical value of communication. Moreover, interactive activities reduce boredom and create a positive learning atmosphere that encourages students to participate willingly.

6.3 Enhancing Confidence

CLT helps students become more confident in using English in different communicative situations. Many Iraqi EFL students feel anxious or afraid of making mistakes when speaking English publicly. Through continuous communicative practice, students gradually overcome fear and develop self-confidence. Frequent exposure to real communication situations helps learners feel more comfortable using English with classmates, teachers, and even outside the classroom environment.

6.4 Developing Real-life Communication

Another important benefit of CLT is preparing learners for real-life communication rather than merely passing examinations. Students learn how to use English in authentic situations such as asking for information, expressing opinions, participating in discussions, and solving problems collaboratively. This practical focus is especially important in modern society where English is widely used in higher education, technology, business, and international communication. Consequently, learners become better prepared for academic and professional life.

6.5 Encouraging Learner Autonomy

The communicative approach also promotes learner autonomy and independence. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through participation, problem-solving, and collaborative activities. Learners become more active in searching for information, expressing ideas, and evaluating their progress. This independence helps students develop critical thinking skills and lifelong learning habits that are essential for academic success.

Experimental studies conducted in Iraq have demonstrated positive effects of communicative teaching on learners' speaking abilities, classroom participation, and overall communication skills. Many researchers concluded that students taught through communicative methods show greater improvement in fluency, confidence, and interaction compared with those taught through traditional grammar-based approaches.

7. Principles of the Communicative Approach

Communicative Language Teaching is based on several important principles that guide classroom teaching and learning. These principles emphasize meaningful communication, learner participation, interaction, and the practical use of language. Unlike traditional methods that focus mainly on memorization and grammar drills, CLT aims to create an environment where learners use language naturally and purposefully.

7.1 Meaningful Communication

One of the central principles of CLT is that language learning should focus on meaningful communication. Classroom activities should encourage learners to exchange real information, ideas, feelings, and opinions rather than simply memorize grammatical rules. Students learn more effectively when they use language for authentic purposes. Therefore, communicative tasks are designed to simulate real-life communication situations that require genuine interaction.

7.2 Interaction

Interaction plays a fundamental role in communicative language learning. According to communicative theory, language develops through communication between learners and teachers. Pair work, group discussions, and collaborative tasks provide students with opportunities to practice the target language actively. Through interaction, learners improve their fluency, negotiation skills, and ability to understand others in different communicative contexts.

7.3 Authenticity

CLT emphasizes the use of authentic materials and real-life tasks in the classroom. Authentic materials may include newspapers, videos, advertisements, interviews, menus, or online resources used by native speakers in daily life. Exposure to authentic language helps learners understand how English is naturally used outside the classroom. This principle also increases students' motivation because learning becomes more realistic and practical.

7.4 Learner-centeredness

The communicative approach is learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. In communicative classrooms, students play an active role in the learning process while the teacher acts mainly as a facilitator and guide. Learners participate in discussions, problem-solving activities, and collaborative

tasks that encourage independence and creativity. This principle allows students to develop responsibility for their own learning and increases classroom participation.

7.5 Fluency and Accuracy

CLT recognizes the importance of both fluency and grammatical accuracy in language learning. Fluency refers to the ability to communicate ideas smoothly and confidently, while accuracy refers to correct language use. Communicative teaching encourages learners to express themselves freely without excessive fear of mistakes. At the same time, teachers provide guidance and correction to help students improve grammatical accuracy gradually.

7.6 Integration of Skills

Another important principle of CLT is the integration of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In real-life communication, these skills are rarely used separately. Therefore, communicative activities often combine multiple skills simultaneously. For example, students may listen to a conversation, discuss its content orally, read related information, and finally write a summary or response. This integration helps learners develop comprehensive communicative ability.

8. Classroom Activities in CLT

Communicative Language Teaching uses a variety of interactive classroom activities that encourage learners to communicate actively in English. These activities focus on meaningful interaction rather than passive memorization of rules. By participating in communicative tasks, students develop fluency, confidence, cooperation, and problem-solving skills while using the target language naturally.

8.1 Role Plays

Role plays are among the most common activities used in communicative classrooms. In this activity, students act out real-life situations such as shopping, ordering food, interviewing for jobs, or visiting a doctor. Role plays help learners practice language in realistic contexts and improves their speaking confidence. They also develop creativity and social communication skills because students must respond spontaneously during interaction.

8.2 Pair Work

Pair work encourages students to work together in order to exchange information, complete tasks, or solve problems. This activity increases student participation because every learner has the opportunity to speak and interact actively. Pair work also reduces anxiety, especially for shy learners, because students often feel more comfortable speaking with one partner rather than in front of the whole class. Consequently, learners receive more communicative practice and become more engaged in classroom activities.

8.3 Group Discussions

Group discussions provide learners with opportunities to express opinions, share ideas, and debate different topics collaboratively. These discussions encourage critical thinking and improve learners' ability to organize and present ideas clearly in English. Through group interaction, students also learn how to listen respectfully, respond appropriately, and negotiate meaning with others. This activity therefore develops both linguistic and social communication skills.

8.4 Information Gap Activities

Information gap activities involve situations where one student possesses information that another student needs in order to complete a task. Learners must communicate actively to exchange missing information and achieve a common goal. Such activities create genuine communication because students have a real reason to interact. Information gap tasks improve questioning skills, listening comprehension, and spontaneous language production.

8.5 Problem-solving Tasks

Problem-solving activities require students to cooperate in finding solutions to communicative or practical problems. Learners may discuss solutions, compare opinions, and make decisions together using English as the medium of communication. These tasks encourage teamwork, creativity, and critical thinking while promoting meaningful language use. Problem-solving activities also reflect real-life communication situations where language is used to accomplish specific purposes.

8.6 Interviews and Surveys

Interviews and surveys are useful communicative activities that encourage learners to ask and answer questions in authentic ways. Students may interview classmates, teachers, or community members to collect information about specific topics. After gathering information, learners often present or discuss their findings with others. These activities improve speaking, listening, and interpersonal communication skills while increasing learners' confidence in using English naturally.

Overall, communicative classroom activities increase learner interaction, participation, and motivation. They create opportunities for Iraqi EFL students to practice English meaningfully and naturally, which ultimately improves communicative competence and prepares learners for real-life communication situations.

9. The Role of Teachers in Communicative Classrooms

In traditional classrooms, teachers dominate lessons and provide information directly. In communicative classrooms, the teacher's role changes significantly.

The teacher becomes:

Facilitator

Organizer

Motivator

Guide

Participant

Evaluator

Teachers should create supportive classroom environments where students feel comfortable communicating in English.

10. The Role of Students in CLT

Students are active participants in communicative classrooms. They are expected to:

Interact with classmates

Participate in discussions

Express opinions

Negotiate meaning

Cooperate in group tasks

Use English creatively

Learners are no longer passive receivers of information.

Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching by Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers discusses major language teaching methods and approaches, including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The book explains the principles, objectives, classroom techniques, and historical development of modern language teaching approaches in detail.

Interpreting Communicative Language Teaching by Sandra J. Savignon focuses on the theory and practice of communicative language teaching. The author emphasizes communicative competence and explains how meaningful interaction supports second language acquisition.

Teaching Language as Communication by H. G. Widdowson highlights the importance of teaching language for communication rather than memorization of grammar rules. The book explains that learners should develop the ability to use language effectively in real communicative situations.

Faris Kadhim Te'ama (2023) investigated Iraqi EFL university students' awareness and use of communication strategies. The study found that many students lacked awareness of effective communication strategies and rarely used them during interaction.

N. O. Hussein (2024) examined the effect of Communicative Language Teaching on Iraqi learners' communication skills. Results showed that students taught through communicative methods significantly improved their speaking and interaction abilities compared with traditionally taught students.

S. Bdaiwi and I. Sayer (2023) evaluated communicative competence among Iraqi EFL university students. Their findings indicated that learners possessed moderate communicative competence and needed more communicative practice.

M. Al-Husseiny and O. Ilyas (2024) studied intercultural communicative competence among Iraqi EFL learners. The study concluded that students' actual communicative competence was lower than their self-evaluations.

I. H. Al-Jumaily and I. T. Alazzawi (2025) explored Iraqi students' attitudes toward multimodal communicative approaches. Findings revealed that students had positive attitudes toward interactive communicative and technological learning methods.

T. D. Ahmed and I. T. Al-Azzawi (2023) examined the influence of strategic competence on Iraqi EFL students' conversations. The study showed that communication strategies positively improved learners' conversational performance and interaction skills.

A. Aldahhan and N. A. Razak (2024) investigated the impact of digital platforms on Iraqi undergraduate EFL students' communicative competence. Results demonstrated that digital learning platforms positively enhanced students' communication abilities, participation, and confidence in English use.

12. Technology and the Communicative Approach

Technology plays an important role in supporting and developing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in modern educational environments. The integration of digital tools into language classrooms has created new opportunities for learners to practice English interactively and meaningfully. Technology allows students to communicate with teachers, classmates, and even international speakers through various online platforms and applications. In Iraqi EFL contexts, technological integration has become increasingly important because it helps overcome limitations related to traditional teaching methods and provides learners with greater exposure to authentic English communication.

Modern technological tools encourage active participation, collaboration, and learner-centered instruction, which are central principles of the communicative approach. Instead of relying only on textbooks and teacher explanations, students can now engage in interactive activities that improve listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills simultaneously. Technology also increases learners' motivation because digital environments are often more enjoyable, flexible, and realistic than traditional classroom practices.

Online Discussions

Online discussion platforms provide students with opportunities to exchange ideas, opinions, and information through written or spoken communication. Learners can participate in forums, classroom discussion boards, and virtual group activities that encourage interaction in English. Such discussions help students improve their language fluency, critical thinking, and confidence while communicating with others. Online discussions are especially beneficial for shy learners because they provide a less stressful environment for participation.

Video Conferencing

Video conferencing tools such as virtual classrooms and online meeting applications allow students to communicate face-to-face with teachers and classmates regardless of physical distance. These platforms create authentic communication situations where learners practice speaking, listening, and interaction skills in real time. Video conferencing also enables Iraqi EFL learners to participate in international communication experiences, which increases cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence.

Language Learning Applications

Language learning applications provide learners with flexible and personalized opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. Many applications include communicative exercises, pronunciation practice, interactive dialogues, and vocabulary-building activities. These tools encourage self-directed learning and allow students to improve their language skills according to their individual pace and needs. Furthermore, language applications often provide immediate feedback, which helps learners recognize and correct mistakes effectively.

Interactive Games

Interactive educational games make language learning more engaging and enjoyable for students. Communicative games encourage learners to use English actively while solving problems, answering questions, or cooperating with classmates. These activities increase classroom interaction and reduce anxiety because students focus on communication and participation rather than fear of making errors. Educational games also improve motivation and help learners remember language more effectively through enjoyable experiences.

Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms have become powerful tools for communicative language learning. Students can use social networking applications to communicate in English, share ideas, comment on discussions, and interact with global communities. Exposure to authentic language on social media helps learners understand real-life communication patterns, informal expressions, and cultural aspects of language use. Additionally, social media creates opportunities for continuous language practice beyond classroom boundaries.

AI-powered Language Tools

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered language tools are increasingly influencing English language learning and communication practice. AI applications can provide grammar correction, pronunciation feedback, conversational practice, and personalized learning support. These tools help Iraqi EFL learners improve accuracy and fluency by offering immediate responses and adaptive learning experiences. AI-powered platforms also encourage independent learning and allow students to practice communication skills anytime and anywhere.

Recent studies conducted in Iraq indicate that digital platforms and technological tools positively affect Iraqi EFL students' communicative competence. Researchers found that students who regularly use digital communication tools demonstrate better speaking confidence, increased classroom participation, and stronger interaction skills compared with learners who rely only on traditional teaching methods. Therefore, integrating technology into communicative language teaching can significantly improve the quality of English language education in Iraqi universities.

13. Previous Studies

Several previous studies have investigated the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and communicative competence among Iraqi EFL learners. These studies focused on areas such as speaking skills, communication strategies, intercultural competence, and students' attitudes toward communicative learning. The findings generally support the importance of communicative teaching methods in improving learners' language performance and interaction abilities in Iraqi educational contexts.

13.1 Hussein (2024)

Hussein conducted a study investigating the effect of Communicative Language Teaching on Iraqi learners' communication skills. The study compared students who were taught through communicative activities with others who learned through traditional grammar-based methods. The findings revealed that learners exposed to CLT demonstrated significant improvement in speaking fluency, classroom interaction, and overall communication abilities. The study emphasized that communicative teaching

creates a more active learning environment that encourages students to use English meaningfully and confidently.

13.2 Bdaiwi and Sayer (2023)

Bdaiwi and Sayer examined communicative competence among Iraqi university students learning English as a foreign language. Their study aimed to evaluate students' abilities in grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. Results showed that most students possessed only moderate levels of communicative competence despite years of studying English. The researchers concluded that Iraqi EFL learners require more communicative practice and interactive classroom activities to enhance their practical language use.

13.3 Te'ama (2023)

Te'ama investigated Iraqi students' awareness and use of communication strategies in English language learning. The study focused on strategies such as paraphrasing, asking for clarification, repetition, and using synonyms during communication difficulties. Findings indicated that many students lacked awareness of these strategies and rarely used them effectively during classroom interaction. The researcher suggested integrating communication strategy training into English language instruction to improve learners' confidence and communicative performance.

13.4 Al-Husseiny and Ilyas (2024)

Al-Husseiny and Ilyas conducted research on intercultural communicative competence among Iraqi EFL learners. The study explored students' ability to communicate appropriately across different cultural contexts while using English. The findings demonstrated that students often rated their communicative competence more positively than their actual classroom performance indicated. The researchers concluded that Iraqi learners need greater exposure to authentic intercultural communication activities to develop realistic and effective communicative competence.

13.5 Al-Jumaily and Alazzawi (2025)

Al-Jumaily and Alazzawi explored Iraqi university students' attitudes toward multimodal approaches in communication learning. The study investigated the use of interactive methods such as videos, digital tools, presentations, and collaborative communicative activities in English classrooms. Results revealed that students held positive attitudes toward interactive communicative learning methods because such approaches increased motivation, participation, and understanding. The researchers recommended incorporating modern communicative and technological strategies into Iraqi EFL instruction to improve learners' engagement and

communication skills.

14. Discussion

The communicative approach has become increasingly important in Iraqi EFL contexts because it addresses learners' real communication needs. Traditional teaching methods focusing on memorization and grammar have not succeeded in developing students' communicative competence adequately.

Research findings indicate that Iraqi university students often experience difficulties in speaking fluently and interacting effectively in English. Communicative teaching provides opportunities for authentic interaction and meaningful language use.

The findings also reveal that communicative activities improve students' confidence, motivation, and classroom participation. Students become more willing to use English when classrooms are interactive and supportive.

However, implementing CLT successfully in Iraq requires overcoming numerous challenges such as large classrooms, insufficient teacher preparation, lack of resources, and traditional assessment systems.

Technology and AI-based educational tools may provide additional opportunities for communicative learning, especially in developing speaking and interaction skills.

15. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are suggested:

Iraqi universities should encourage communicative teaching practices.

Teachers should receive professional training in CLT methods.

English classrooms should include more communicative activities.

Assessment systems should evaluate communicative competence, not only grammar knowledge.

Technology and AI tools should be integrated into English language teaching.

Students should be encouraged to participate actively in classroom interaction.

Universities should reduce class sizes when possible.

Authentic materials should be used frequently in classrooms.

Teachers should create supportive and anxiety-free learning environments.

Further studies should investigate communicative competence among Iraqi EFL learners.

16. Conclusion

The communicative approach represents one of the most effective methods for teaching English to Iraqi EFL university students. It focuses on meaningful communication, interaction, learner participation, and communicative competence. Iraqi students benefit significantly from communicative instruction through improved speaking skills, increased confidence, and enhanced motivation.

Although several obstacles hinder effective implementation, communicative teaching remains essential for improving English language education in Iraqi universities. Educational institutions, teachers, and curriculum designers should work collaboratively to promote communicative classrooms that prepare students for real-life communication and academic success.

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