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The Effect of Using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on Developing EFL Iraqi Learners' English Communication Skills: An Experimental Study

A B S T R A C T

The research aimed to explore the effect of the communicative approach on developing Iraqi Learners' English communication skills. Sixty-two Iraqi learners who were studying English language in the 6th preparatory class at Palistain Preparatory School, Anbar at the academic year 2022-2023, were chosen as a sample of the current research. The pre-test and post-test were utilized as an instrument of the study. A pre-test was conducted, and the sample was divided into two groups: the experimental group, which was taught the English language using the communicative approach, and the second group, which was taught the English language using the traditional method. Both groups were taught the contents of grammar for the 6th preparatory school. After the experiment, a post-test was conducted to collect data. The results revealed that the experimental group obtained better marks than the control group in post-tests for communication skills. Therefore, the research recommends that policymakers and English teachers are recommended to use the communicative approach as the best method for teaching communication skills in the new Iraqi curriculum.

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أثر استخدام تدريس الطريقة التواصلية على تطوير مهارات التواصل باللغة الإنجليزية لدى المتعلمين العراقيين كلغة أجنبية: دراسة تجريبية

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في محافظة الأنبار

المخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف ما إذا كان هناك تأثير لاستخدام الطريقة التواصلية على تنمية مهارات التواصل باللغة الإنجليزية لدى المتعلمين العراقيين. تم استخدام اثنين وستين طالبا عراقيا كعينة للبحث، والذين يدرسون اللغة الانجليزية في الصف السادس الاعدادي في اعدادية فلسطين ، الرمادي، الأنبار. وتم استخدام الاختبار كأداة للدراسة. وبعد انتهاء الاختبار ، تم تقسيم العينة إلى مجموعتين: المجموعة التجريبية التي تم تدريسها اللغة الإنجليزية باستخدام المنهج التواصلية، في حين تم تدريس المجموعة الضابطة اللغة الإنجليزية باستخدام الطريقة التقليدية. تم تدريس كلا المجموعتين محتويات النحو للصف السادس الإعدادي. وبعد الانتهاء من التجربة تم إجراء اختبار بعدي لجمع البيانات. وتحليل البيانات أظهرت النتائج حصول المجموعة التجريبية على درجات أعلى من المجموعة الضابطة في الاختبارات البعدية لمهارات الاتصال. ولذلك يوصي البحث و صانعي السياسات ومدرسي اللغة الانجليزية باستخدام المنهج التواصلية كأفضل طريقة لتدريس مهارات الاتصال في المنهاج العراقي الجديد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المنهج التواصلية، مهارات التواصل باللغة الانجليزية لدى المتعلمين العراقيين

1. Introduction:

The communicative approach is regarded as a basic approach and suitable approach that should be taught in any educational curriculum at the preparatory school and university levels in Iraq. Because it has taken an important role in increasing learners' communicative competence, communication skills, and significantly improving learners' performance, vocabularies particularly in the new curricula. Modern activity and task-based curricula are implemented in schools' rooms for learners to practice oral practice communication inside and outside the classroom. Many studies have concluded that learners need more practice to develop

their performance through the utilization of communicative approaches (Al-Saghir, 2011; Farouk, 2012; Rahman, 2002)

The communicative approach is extensively utilized as a foreign language teaching method to enhance communication skills in the classroom (Chen, 2011; Banciu & Jireghie, 2012). As a movement, the communicative approach is a contemporary teaching method that emphasizes mastering basic language grammar, and vocabulary through planned and organized activities, practices, and different groups that develop learners' ideas, thoughts, and communication. In the same view, it includes memorizing dialogues, role-playing, and working on joint projects within the application of the classroom (Celce-Murcia, 200; Rahman, 2002; Richards, 2006). Moreover, the communicative approach is defined as the basic activities, tasks, and practical discussion involved in the practice of using language within a real communicative context, which is concentration and the exchange of ideas, and knowledge where real information is mutual, and where the language utilized is essentially unpredictable (Richards, 2006; Mahmoud, 2012).

More importantly, the communicative approach can be better implemented in the Iraqi curriculum through the use of suitable activities, exercises, and tasks in the classroom to develop communication skills. A communicative approach can be effective in dealing with the deficiencies of Iraqi learners' communication in English. Therefore, this research shed light on the effectiveness of the CLT curriculum in English as a foreign language classroom in Iraqi schools.

1.1 Problem Statement

Most English teachers focus on traditional methods in teaching new curricula in Iraq and neglect new methods such as the communicative method, particularly in teaching new English curricula (Mehmmmod, 2012; Ubeid, 2013).

1.2 Aims

1. To discover the effect of the communicative approach in developing Iraqi learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

1. No significant effect of using a communicative approach in developing Iraqi learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

1.4 Significance of Research

This research may be of great significance to English teachers especially in Iraqi schools, as it focuses on using the communication approach, which has an effective role in developing four skills. Also, the study encourages other teachers to conduct more studies on communicative language teaching.

2. Literature Review

Today, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), also called the Communicative Approach (CA), is an interactive approach to teaching English that focuses on group communication among learners and the exchange of ideas in collaborative format ways and conveys the meaning or to achieve the communicative language in a graded aspect of speaking, That is, fluency, accuracy, clarity, intonation, content, and

volume. In this case, learners can learn something new or entertaining through the various types of activities in teaching English (Sultana, 2014).

Richards (2006) has done a study on the influence of the communicative method on improving learners' motivation. He used the tests and surveys as tools in his study. The sample which consisted of 44 learners at the University of Oman was chosen arbitrarily. This method has an opportunity to improve their creativity in addition to helping them realize and understand the features of grammatical rules that it is the basis of the target language. After the experiment had finished, the survey and tests were given to students. The results showed the essential role of the communicative method in increasing students' communication skills.

Dimond-Bayir (2017) clarified the impact of the communicative method on enhancing learners' motivation, there were 48 learners in international school. The test and interview were used as tools of the study. There were six weeks for the experimental study. The results show the learners who were taught the communicative method got higher scores than learners who were taught the traditional method.

Tongboonyoun (2019) referred to the impact of the communicative approach on chains' communication skills at the university level. Eighty-six learners were used as a sample of the research. Interviews and tests were utilized as instrument research. The sample was divided into two groups. The experimental group was taught grammar content using the communicative approach, while the control group was

taught the same material using the traditional method. The experiment study took six weeks. After the experiment had been completed. The study discovered that the experimental group got high scores compared to the control group.

Najeebullah and Tabassum in their study (2022) stated the effect of the communicative approach on enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills. Pre and post-test tests were used as instrument study. The sample consisted of 66 learners at a preparatory school. After the end of the application period, a post-test was conducted to evaluate their level, and the results showed that the experimental group achieved better results than the control group in the post-tests.

3. Procedures

3.1 Population of the Research

All students (575) at the preparatory school. Palistain Preparatory School for boys in Ramadi, Anbar. Sixty-two (62) students were chosen as a sample of the study.

3.2 Sample of the Research

The sample consisted of sixty-two (62) students who were taken from preparatory at Palistain Preparatory School, Anbar. They were selected randomly. Sixty-two (62) students were distributed into experimental (31 students) and control groups (31 students).

3.3 Instruments of Research

The test was used as a research instrument, as the test included both pre-test and post-tests. The students were divided into two groups: the first group was called the

experimental group (31 students), where the grammar subject for the sixth grade of preparatory school was taught through the use of the communicative approach, and the second group was called the control group (31 students), where the same subject was taught through the use of the traditional method. The researcher took measures after the end of the experiment, including the accuracy of the content, including the tools used, which were carefully verified by preparing the basic specifications plan, and then began the discussion with the subject teacher, verification, and exchange of ideas. After completing the experimental research, the post-test was used to evaluate the level of the learners.

3.4 Research Procedure

1. First of all, all students were evaluated using a pre-test to determine their level.
2. After completing the pre-test, both groups were taught the same material, including English grammar in Iraqi English for the sixth grade of school. The duration of the experiment took sixteen lessons for both groups.
3. After the experiment was done, a post-test was conducted for both groups to measure their level.

3.5 Data Collection

A pre-test was conducted and took data. After that, the researcher divided the sample into two groups; experimental and control groups. The first group called the experimental group was trained on material through the communicative method, and the second called the control group was trained on the same material through a

traditional method. The experiment took six weeks. After completing the experiment, the post-test was conducted to find out whether the communicative approach had an impact or not.

4. Findings

Table 1

Results of the first question.

| Group | N | Df | M | S.D | SEd | t-value |
|---------|----|----|------|------|------|---------|
| Exp | 31 | 54 | 5.16 | 0.74 | 0.68 | 2.18 |
| Control | 31 | | 3.67 | 1.34 | | |

Table (1) shows the results of the first question, the mean scores of the experimental group were 5.16 while the control groups were 3.67. In the same table, the SD of the experimental was 0.74 while the control groups were 1.34. Therefore, the SD of the first group (experimental group) displayed better findings than the second group (control group). The results show that the communicative approach played an essential role in developing Iraqi learners' listening skills. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 3

Results of the third question.

| Group | N | Df | Mean | S.D | SEd | t-value |
|---------|----|----|------|------|------|---------|
| Exp | 31 | 54 | 3.77 | 0.93 | 0.33 | 2.18 |
| Control | 31 | | 2.91 | 1.16 | | |

In Table (3) for the experimental group, the mean scores were 3.77 while the control groups were 2.91. In the same table, the SD of the experimental was 0.93 while the control group was 1.16. Therefore, the SD of the first group (experimental group) revealed improved findings than the second group (control group) on the post-test. The finding displays that the communicative approach has a fundamental role in developing Iraqi learners' reading skills. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4

Results of the fourth question.

| Group | N | Df | Mean | S.D | SEd | t-value |
|---------|----|----|------|------|------|---------|
| Exp | 31 | 54 | 3.90 | 0.15 | 0.76 | 3.82 |
| Control | 31 | | 1.52 | 1.90 | | |

Table (4) shows the mean scores of the experimental group were 3.90 while the control groups were 1.52. In the same table, the SD of the experimental was 0.15 while the control groups were 1.90. Therefore, the SD of the first group (experimental group) presented better results than the second group (control group). Hence. The results indicate the essential role of the communicative approach in developing Iraqi learners' writing skills.

5. Discussion

After the treatment had finished, a post-test was conducted for both groups to determine their level. The results are explained below: Regarding the first hypothesis, which is based on the t value $2.18 > 2.015$, it indicates that the communicative approach played an essential role and had a significant impact on developing the Iraqi learners' listening skills. Therefore, the outcomes of the present research agree with the research by (Sultana, 2014; Brown, 2000; Najeebullah and Tabassum, 2022) who stated that the learners were taught English by using the communicative approach, and they got good scores on their test for listening skills. As for the second hypothesis of research, the hypothesis was rejected based on the t value of $2.45 > 2.015$. This outcome indicated the Iraqi learners who studied the English language by using the communicative approach outperformed the control group in their speaking skills. These outcomes are consistent with the findings mentioned in the research of (Hornby, 2000; Ellis, 2002; Hussein, 2005; Katimba, and Holo, 2013), where the results appeared almost similar, as they said that students who studied by using the communicative approach indicated high outcomes. The results also show the essential role of a communicative approach in enhancing learners' communication skills. As for the third hypothesis, which is based on the t value of $2.18 > 2.015$. The

outcomes of the current research indicate the fundamental role of the communicative approach and these results are consistent with the results confirmed by (Rahman, 2002; Chen, 2012), and also adopted by Katmeba and Holo (2013) which indicate better results through using the communicative approach, especially in reading skill. As for the fourth hypothesis, the experimental group scored a better score which was 3.93, which is considered advanced scores than the control group, which was 1.55. These results indicate that there were differences that indicate the essential role of the communicative approach to developing writing skills, and the t value of $3.82 > 2.015$, caused the hypothesis to be rejected. The results showed results similar to the outcomes of different researchers such as (Peixing (2007; Tongboonyoung, 2019) who confirmed that the effective use of the communicative approach was very beneficial in developing Iraqi learners' writing skills. Hence, the results of the four questions demonstrated that the communicative approach is one of the best modern methods, as it plays a greater role in teaching four skills

6. Conclusion

The researcher indicated conclusions after the data analysis, and these conclusions include:

1. After analyzing the data, outcomes revealed better scores in listening skills for the experimental group than for the control.
2. Results demonstrated that the communicative approach is one of the best modern methods, as it plays a greater role than traditional methods in teaching speaking skills.
3. The results of the research showed better scores for the experimental reading skill group than for the control.
4. Research outcomes displayed better scores for the experimental group in writing skills compared to the control group.

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