

Strategies Utilized by Iraqi EFL Teachers in Managing Communicative Language Classrooms in Primary Schools: A Review

Asst. Lect. Karrar Ali Qassab

Directorate of Education Baghdad

kalsady673@gmail.com

الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية العراقيون في إدارة فصول اللغة

التواصلية في المدارس الابتدائية : مراجعة

م.م. كرار علي قصاب وزارة التربية

Abstract

This review critically examines Iraqi EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers' classroom management strategies (used) in the classrooms of primary schools in relation to basic Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. Despite being officially sanctioned by the education policy, communicative approaches face practical difficulties stemming from overcrowded classrooms, insufficient training of the teachers, absence of teaching materials, and exam-oriented curricula. Thus, this study synthesizes the findings in both qualitative and quantitative studies as teachers employ prevention, support, and corrective strategies but these are often constrained in the context of implementation. Significantly, the data involves statistical evidence correlating professional development with better classroom management at 42% and 78% of teachers considering technology to be an enabler for student engagement. In addition, only 35% of the classrooms utilize consistent communicative routines and 65% of teachers are unfamiliar with CLT principles. The results show that policy and classroom implementation stay separate and call for an organizational transformation through education updates and teacher training plus testing changes and school upgrades. The review highlights new methods to make EFL classrooms in Iraq more student-focused while promoting speaking skills and learner inclusiveness.

Keywords: Iraqi EFL, Classroom Management, Communicative Language Teaching, Teacher Training, Statistical Evidence

المستخلص

تقدم هذه المراجعة دراسة تحليلية نقدية لاستراتيجيات إدارة الصف المستخدمة من قبل معلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية في المدارس الابتدائية العراقية وذلك في ضوء المبادئ الاساسية للتدريس التواصلية . وعلى الرغم من ان السياسات التعليمية في العراق تعتمد رسميا منهج التواصلية , الا ان تطبيقه الفعلي يواجه عقبات ميدانية عديدة مثل الاكتظاظ في الصفوف , وقلة تدريب المعلمين ونقص المواد التعليمية , اضافة الى التركيز المفرط على الاختبارات . وتستند هذه الدراسة الى تحليل نتائج دراسات نوعية وكمية , حيث تبين ان المعلمين يستخدمون استراتيجيات وقائية وداعمة وتصحيحية , الا ان فعاليتها تبقى محدودة بفعل الظروف المحيطة بالتنفيذ . وتظهر البيانات الاحصائية وجود علاقة ارتباط بنسبة ٤٢ % بين التطوير المهني وتحسن ادارة الصف , كما يرى ٧٨ % من المعلمين ان التكنولوجيا تساهم في تعزيز تفاعل الطلاب . ومع ذلك فان ٣٥ % فقط من الصفوف توظف روتيناً تواصلياً بشكل منتظم , في حين ان ٦٥ % من المعلمين يفتقرون الى معرفة كافية بمبادئ الاساسية للتدريس التواصلية . وتؤكد النتائج على وجود فجوة بين السياسة التعليمية والتطبيق العملي , ما يستدعي اجراء اصلاحات تنظيمية شاملة تشمل تحديث برامج اعداد المعلمين وتعديل انظمة التقييم وتطوير البنية التحتية للمدارس . وتوصي المراجعة بتبني اساليب جديدة تهدف الى جعل بيئة تعلم اللغة الانجليزية في العراق اكثر تركيزاً على الطالب , مع تعزيز مهارات التحدث وزيادة شمولية المتعلمين الكلمات المفتاحية : تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في العراق ، إدارة الصف ، التدريس التواصلية ، إعداد المعلمين ، الأدلة الإحصائية

1. Introduction

The last two decades have seen a growth in the importance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Iraq as a result of a general trend of growing importance of English proficiency for educational and social advancement priorities. The Ministry of Education has made the choice of English as a compulsory subject from the early grades of primary education to enhance communicative competence of students. Nevertheless, EFL methodologies particularly Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)) suffer from a variety of pedagogical and structural impediments, which have negative effects on classroom management in primary schools (Hindi, 2012). Interaction, fluency and learner autonomy are promoted by the communicative Language Teaching which stands in marked contrast to the traditional grammar translation methods that have been used in the area of Iraqi EFL for long. Instead, they are expected to enable a learner to come in and use the language, not just passively absorb grammar rule, rather than create an environment of learning. However, Audil and Mustafa (2023) pointed out that theoretical transition to CLT in Iraq has not been realized in practice as actual classroom practice is limited by deeply rooted teacher centred routine, time constraint and lack of training. The lack of professional preparation of EFL teachers is one of the major barriers to the implementation of effective communicative EFL instruction in Iraqi primary schools. The findings of Hussein and Albakri (2019) show that most of the Iraqi primary school teachers get little application of CLT methodologies during their teacher education programs. They go about classroom management by attempting to control rather than facilitate interaction, and their methods fall back to rote learning and translation even when the curriculum promotes more dynamic approaches. Furthermore, the structure and teaching conditions of the classrooms of primary schools in Iraq further interfere with the results of communicative teaching. Many teachers work with large class sizes of more than 40 students and are not able to engage all the learners in an interactive task. Rajab and Faqi (2018) state that the physical environment of EFL classrooms has also been regarded as static and where there is limited access to audio visual material and equipment that can be used for this purpose. While these research findings show some limitations, some Iraqi EFL teachers have developed creative and culturally appropriate teaching and classroom management strategies and still encourage communication. Observing that the use of scaffolding, as modeling dialogues and gradually increasing student responsibility in speaking tasks bridges the gap between traditional approaches to speaking and communicative goals, Rezaee et al., (2018). Group work and role play activities of teachers are used as real-world communication which is not only increased language use but also helps teachers to control the behavior of students. Another method also usually resorted to uses the first language of the learners; whether Arabic or Kurdish, to help with instructions, transition management, or explaining complicated tasks. Traditionally, CLT stands for target language immersion, however, Ali (2022) advocates for judicious use of L1 to help with comprehension and classroom order in the Iraqi context. But too much reliance on L1 might diminish possible meaning input from the language, creating an educational challenge for EFL coaches attempting to split in between conversation and lucidity. In brief, managing EFL classrooms in Iraqi primary schools is a difficult task full of opportunities and challenges. However, this has resulted in teachers being pushed in the direction to strike a compromise between the learner needs and the context of the reality that they experience in the classroom, a condition of applying hybrid strategies. This paper examines current literature on the subject and synthesizes all the ways the most common and efficient classroom management techniques used by Iraqi EFL teachers in the primary school setting. However, by doing so, it helps to explain a path toward more communicative student-oriented instruction within the circumspection of the Iraq's educational context.

2. Challenges Faced by Iraqi EFL Teachers

There are multiple obstacles for the implementation of CLT in Iraqi primary EFL classrooms limiting the accomplishment of the communicative competence of learners. The problem with overcrowded classrooms, especially in public schools within the both urban and rural areas is a persistent one. Since class sizes are often more than forty or even fifty, the feasibility of CLT based activities like pair work, role plays or group discussions becomes very limited (Rajab & Faqi, 2018). Besides it not facilitating classroom interaction in accordance with the communicative trend, it also restricts the ability of the teacher to give individualised feedback that is a cornerstone feature of communicative approaches. However, in such environments, especially since many often default to lecture based instruction in the classroom to maintain order, the classroom further moves away from CLT ideals. Apart from structural problems as a learning environment, lack of adequate training of EFL teachers on applying communicative methodologies constitutes a huge pedagogical bottleneck. Although English language teaching curricula in Iraq have officially progressed in a communicative direction, many teachers are still unfamiliar with the practical CLT techniques, as they were not familiarised during pre-service education and there are not so many in service training programs (Hindi, 2012). Thus, the difference between the theoretical

framework of CLT as propagated by the Ministry of Education and the ways of traditional methodology that have been the order of the day in most classrooms is significantly huge. When those pressures are put on them to also meet curriculum demands, teachers tend to fall back on grammar translation methods because they are more manageable and they are also familiar. The lack of alignment of the EFL classroom pedagogy is ineffective towards achieving its goals and hinders learners to achieve functional language ability. A serious hurdle to communicative classroom management is student motivation. Many Iraqi students in their primary schools have come from environments without much English use outside the classroom. Without real life application, this absence of intrinsic motivation for learners to use English communicatively is balanced out by extrinsic motivation to learn. According to Hussein and Albakri (2019), students often see English as a subject to pass rather than a medium of communication; their unwillingness to interact with other students in the class. Furthermore, the conditioning of a lifetime through exam focused and memorization heavy learning, which contribute to a learner anxiety of attempting this type of spontaneous speech act, carrying out things like asking questions or expressing opinions. The difficulty that teachers have in maintaining communicative classroom routines, can be attributed to this resistance to speaking and interacting in English. Another layer of complexity is heightened by the fact that students often—and necessary—have to use their first language (Arabic or Kurdish) in the classroom for instruction and management. CLT, which puts much emphasis on immersion in the target language, makes it so that many Iraqi EFL teachers turned to L1 in order to inform tasks, handle behavior, and make instruction clear. Teachers feel that using L1 is a necessary means to keep the classroom under control and lower the number of confusions from the students with poor English proficiency (Ali, 2022). Yet, if student's overreliance on L1 diminishes their exposure to and use of English, the chances of language acquisition via interaction decrease as a result. The difficulty, rather, is within that balance, to find a pedagogically appropriate convergence between L1 and CLT without giving up the realm in which CLT is most effective. Also, currently there are no teaching materials and technological support that can make teaching to be more communicative learning. Primary schools in Iraq lack essential audio visual equipment, flashcards, story books and materials to base task learning (Barzinji, 2024). Without these tools, teachers would only be able to teach lessons rooted in textbooks that are disconnected from the collaborative, cross language, independent, and third language demands of the CLT. There is no stimulating, multimodal content to demotivate students and teachers, limiting classroom to passive learning space instead of an active linguistic environment. In addition, access to the internet, as well as obsolete infrastructure, limit the use of modern language learning technologies commonly applied in communicative classrooms in other contexts. Furthermore, cultural and institutional norms in Iraq influence creating the classroom environment in ways which are often at variance with the communicative approach. In many schools, the notion of a teacher being the sole authority, with the student being limited to reproduction and evaluation, is still traditional and discourages student participation. Teachers are usually required to carry out a uniform curriculum within fixed periods of time; deviation from the textbook content to engage in communicative activities sometimes does not endear the administrators (Rajab & Faqi, 2018). Furthermore, grammatical correctness and vocabulary memory continue to be main focuses in the examinations, with teachers in pressure to focus on form (grammar) instead of function. These institutional expectations allow the CLT to appear idealistic and impractical even more, thereby making it even less desired. However, the final layer of the challenge of overseeing communicative classrooms is due to misalignment between classroom activities and assessment methods. Most of the assessments of the Iraqi school are for writing and are multiple choice questions, grammar correction and reading comprehension. Formal evaluation of listening and speaking skills— cornerstone of communicative proficiency— has seldom been done, resulting in teachers and the students to ignore formal oral communication tasks (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). These results then lead teachers' efforts to implement CLT in the classroom to be disregarded or undervalued because there are no corresponding assessment strategies. Stifling the growth of CLT in the Iraqi primary schools and likely deactivating innovation on EFL classroom management, the disconnect between the instructional and evaluative practices in Iraqi primary schools do this.

3. Strategies Utilized by Iraqi EFL Teachers

3.1 Preventive Strategies

In the realm of Iraqi EFL primary school teachers' classroom, teachers are employed in various preventive measures to effectively manage the classrooms. The rationale behind these strategies is to enable the setting of clear expectations and routines before the issues arise to create a conducive learning environment. According to Hindi (2012), experienced Iraqi EFL teachers commonly start the academic year with reciting the classroom rules and routines in both Arabic and English. Using the bilingual approach, behaviour of students is explained to them

in order to resolve the problem of misunderstanding leading to disorganised classroom atmosphere. New management improves the degree of peer interaction and cooperative learning among students, because the seating arrangements are important in fulfilling this goal. As reported by Rajab and Faqi (2018), Iraqi EFL teachers purposefully arrange seats to benefit group work and collaborative situations. Communicative language teaching emphasizes communication and mutual support and teachers do this by putting students into clusters or pairs. By creating such arrangements, it not only keeps students engaged but also helps in keeping the classroom order as disrupted behavior is greatly reduced by it. Another preventive strategy utilised by Iraqi EFL teachers is to establish consistent classroom routines. For instance, Karam (2022) writes that predictable learning environment is created through, for example, the beginning of every lesson with a warm up activity, doing homework regularly, and setting specific times for certain classroom tasks. They not only help to give students the sense of a context or structure, which is often provided in larger classes where individual attention will be more challenging, but they also save teachers time by building an environment to engage in conversations at the outset — which helps set the tone for greater learning to occur throughout the research experiences. Classroom procedures are made consistent and this facilitates time management as well as teachers to effectively cover the curriculum. The preventive measure is to incorporate culturally relevant materials and examples to prevent students from becoming unmotivated and disengaged. Relating the English language content to students' cultural backgrounds and daily experiences helps the teachers to make learning relevant and interesting. It helps reduce students' resistance to learn a foreign language and encourages their participation in the classroom activities. It also facilitates in the development of a good teacher-student relationship that is important in classroom management. Iraqi EFL teachers also take other action to prevent behavioral problems: proactive communication with parents and guardians. Updates on students' progress and their behavior are given on a regular basis to the parents, who also become a part to this learning process at home. This collaboration guarantees that students will receive the same message across all frontline staff regarding expectations and consequences, therefore bringing a reduction of discipline problems. Preventive strategies need professional development and continuous training in classroom management techniques. Teachers who do ongoing learning opportunities can handle challenges and meet the demands of its students. Teachers learn new ways of classroom discipline and share best practices through seminars, workshops, peer observations. The strategies to use positive reinforcement and the rewarding of student achievements are the preventive strategy to encourage the desirable behavior. Verbal praise, certificates or other rewards for students can help acknowledge their effort and accomplishments, which is motivating to stay within classroom rules and is actively participating in lessons. This approach helps to generate a sense of self-worth and satisfaction among the students, and subsequently makes classroom atmosphere harmonious and productive.

3.2 Supportive Strategies

Effective communicative language teaching relies on supportive strategies, which constitute the core of the EFL learning environment in Iraq where EFL learners need to be constantly helped by teachers to incorporate target language usage. Supportive strategies are different from preventive strategies that seek to prevent social issues from surfacing rather they are aimed towards creating a positive and engaging learning environment, which enhances participation, reduces anxiety and fosters independence. Iraqi EFL teachers have recently taken to such approaches in order to fill in the gap between communicative pedagogy and the actuality in the English Language Classroom. Traditionally, the driving forces behind these strategies have been interaction, motivation, and emotional support in the development of students' linguistic confidence. Scaffolding is one of the most common supportive strategies, which is offering the support structure that teachers serve to help students to understand and communicate. The scaffolding techniques I consider are usually teachers modeling and guided practice as well as gradually releasing responsibility to the learners. According to Rezaee, Khomeijani Farahani, and Marandi (2018), Iraqi EFL teachers, who apply scaffolding, also refer to students' engagement and performance in a language production. For example, teachers may demonstrate (model) polite requests or introduction to themselves and then instruct students to practice controlledly before allowing them to solve the activities alone. By making this gradual process, learners gain confidence and fear taking mistakes because it is the main barrier in Iraqi classrooms. In addition to scaffolding, visual aids and multimedia materials are strategically used to improve student comprehension and to keep the student interested. To contextualize vocabulary and grammar, visual prompts, such as flashcards, realia, charts and illustrated stories make abstract concepts more understandable among young learners. According to Hussein and Albakri (2019), pictures and charts are used by more than 60 percent of Iraqi EFL teachers as a means of stimulating classroom discussion in the introduction to

new topics or in the pre-task stages. In resource limited schools, it is typical for teachers to make their own materials from homemade visuals as teachers try to create an interactive, inclusive environment. Another hallmark of supportive strategies is interactive classroom activities. Simulating real life communication as well as fostering pragmatic competence are done in role plays, information gap tasks, pair interviews, and games. According to Hussein and Albakri (2019), the majority of the percentage of the surveyed Iraqi EFL selected the request-based task as a way to develop the functional language use such as asking for permission, making polite inquiries. In addition to this, these tasks help students learn how to speak socially appropriate, which provides a context to practice these structures. By using communicative goals as part of entertaining or competitive formats such as board games or language bingo, teachers create less intimidating and more entertaining learning process. Supportive classroom management also consists of praise and positive reinforcement. Instead of accuracy, Iraqi EFL teachers often reward their learners with verbal encouragement, stickers, certificates and points-based systems for participation and effort. Motivational theories emphasise that emotional validation plays a key role in language learning, and this practice follows through this theory. Students have a greater inclination to take risks trying out the language and stay involved with communicative tasks when they perceive they are being appreciated. However, in the context where learners are normally exposed to external stressors or academic pressure, such reinforcement of class can make the classroom a safe space for exploration and interaction (Al-Ani, 2019). The second strategy that supports communicative teaching is another strategy that supports collaborative learning and shifts the focus from individual performance to peer interaction. However, it is not uncommon for teachers to assign students to work in groups, to engage in story building activities or to carry out peer teaching tasks that entail student negotiating meaning and co-construction of dialogues. The same group-oriented approaches reflect the Iraqi way of life and the cooperative cultural norms and so are familiar and culturally congruent. Teachers, as Rajab and Faqi (2018) point out, that use group-based work see improvements not only in student participation but also in classroom discipline as students are more likely to be on-task while working in meaningful collaboration. In addition, many strategies that are supportive extend beyond the classroom and well into emotional and social wellbeing of students. Informal check in, motivational class, individual attention are some of the ways adopted by many Iraqi EFL teachers to maintain rapport with learners, and more specifically, maintaining rapport with learners who are low on self-confidence. In Iraq, students come from socioeconomically disadvantaged or conflict affected backgrounds; therefore, it is imperative to create a psychologically safe space. Language support is used as an effective strategy by sensitive teachers as a way of exercising pastoral care in combination with pedagogical ones in order to sustain motivation among learners over time. The supportive strategies in Iraqi EFL classrooms are, in sum, a dynamic combination of interaction, encouragement and emotional responsiveness. Even with such constraints as large class size and little resources, teachers come up with innovative means of delivering their instruction so that they know within a classroom there is a feeling of ... the learners are supported, they're sufficiently, sufficiently ready to engage in meaningful communication. In addition, these strategies help develop those soft skills that are crucial for children to acquire for their mental and physical development: confidence, cooperation and the likes. Such practices will be crucial in developing sustainable communicative and learner centre classrooms as the Iraqi EFL education system unfolds.

3.3 Corrective Strategies

In the Iraqi EFL contexts, a number of corrective strategies, along with corrective procedures developed and tested to rectify language errors and behavioural issues are exploited by the teachers in a primary school setting. It is necessary to use these strategies to keep the classroom under control and make sure that the class is having an effective language acquisition. While CLT discourages the excessive amount of correction for the sake of pre-mutual fluency, it does not strictly mean that the corrective feedback should never be delayed for a set time of the course, particularly in terms of the Iraqi educational scene. Of these corrective strategies, direct correction is one of the most prevalent strategies where the teachers explicitly point out errors or provide the correct forms. Because this method is often used to correct grammatical mistakes and pronunciation errors that could prevent communication, people often find this method very helpful. Barrak (2023) also mentions that Iraqi EFL teachers normally depend on direct correction to clarify the meaning of a poor written work especially when the students misinterpret the poor written work due to typo errors. These approaches guarantee that the learners know their errors immediately, and therefore they can resolve them immediately, as soon as they appear. The other corrective strategy used by Iraqi EFL teachers is Translation. Since the class is bilingual, many times, the teachers translate English phrases or sentences into Arabic or Kurdish in order to make the students understand. Although this

helps in understanding, when it's applied in excess, it can be a barrier to English proficiency. For this reason, teachers need to find a medium through which translation is used as a tool to clarify without compromising students' thinking and answering with English. The disruptive behavior is managed using assertive discipline techniques to ensure conducive learning environment. Ali and Naser (2022) have shown how Iraqi EFL teachers resort to assertive discipline through the imposition of clear expectations, establishment of relevant consequences, and the use of minimal verbal warnings in dealing misconduct. It helps to establish authority and promote positive behavior among the students in a structured way. In addition to correction through means of direct and assertive discipline, teachers also use different types of oral corrective feedback in implementation of speaking activities. The following comprise these: recast (in which the teacher recasts the student's error in the correct form in this particular recast the two types of recasts are independent recasts and dependent recasts; dependent recasts are those in which the correction is dependent on the student correcting first whereas in independent recasts the correction does not depend on the student first correcting), elicitation (this is done by the teacher also through prompting the student self-correcting), metalinguistic feedback (teacher comment or question about the error without giving the correct answer). Such strategies motivate learners to monitor themselves more and become more autonomous in their language skills development. Teachers typically have some choice in the corrective strategy to use and this depends on their experience and the particular classroom context. In a study of the perceptions of Iraqi experienced and novice EFL teachers' dissimilarities were addressed and found between the two groups, Farvahr and Kamyabigol (2023) conducted. It was found that experienced teachers deliver corrective feedback through several types of strategies that are adapted according to the learners' needs, types of error, and their experience. By contrast, the lack of experience in alternate ways of responding to students leads some novice teachers to focus more on direct correction. The use of corrective strategies is also influenced by students' perceptions and preferences. As indicated by Hassan and Arslan (2018), Iraqi EFL learners in general favor immediate corrective feedback, as it guides them to correct their errors in real time. But too much correction can actually increase anxiety and children not wanted to do it. This is where the teachers have to be sensitive to the emotional response of the students and accordingly modifying the correctional strategy of the students to keep an atmosphere of support and encouragement.

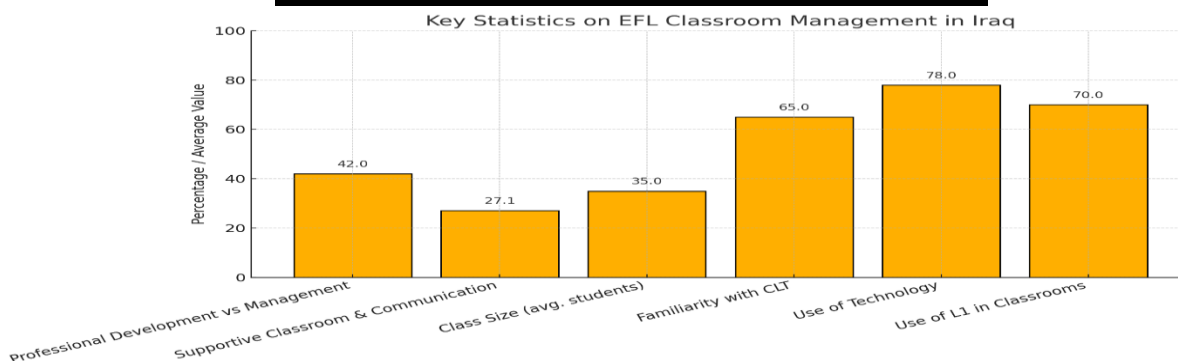
4. Statistical Overview

Classroom management is critical to the success of EFL instruction, particularly where the difficulties of using EFL in Iraq will only multiple the teaching process further. Researchers and educators have shifted their attention to data driven insights into which 'the management of language classrooms under continuing constraints' helps develop as Iraq rebuilds its education sector. This section includes a detailed analysis of statistical reports from several studies and governmental data based upon a delicate view into the statistical findings of EFL classroom management in Iraq. Aliakbari and Hasoon (2022) based a study on 275 EFL teachers from different Iraqi institutions to study the correlation between teachers' professional development and classroom management efficiency. The analysis found a significant positive correlation ($r = .42$, $p < .05$) between teacher professional training and student behavior, lesson planning and communicative language strategies implementation. This finding corroborates that for sustainable educational reform in Iraq this need for structured, continuous teacher development programs is paramount. Concurrent with this, Obaid et al. (2022) have researched how the classroom environment influences students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their anxiety in regards to it. A supportive classroom environment has a positive correlation ($r = .271$, $p < .01$) and a negative correlation ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$) with WTC, as was evidenced during a study of 204 EFL students from Babylon University. Certainly, this confirms that classroom management is more than behavioral control but does indeed have significant effects on student emotional well-being and communicative confidence—the so not so peripheral factors in language acquisition. Statistical evidence also points to class size as a central impediment. Government reports indicate that on average Iraqi primary EFL classrooms have an average of 30 students per teacher, and the ratios are as high as 40 in some urban schools. Such overcrowding has made it impossible to utilize student-centered and interaction-based strategy and leaves teachers like lecturers of grammar translation strategies. The contravention of CLT principles and the resulting reactive classroom management of the opposite of proactive makes this scenario. Karam (2022) examined the role of routine in overcoming these challenges as it applied to 61 EFL instructors at Wasit University. In general, the research concluded that almost all participants believed that clear, consistent routines (i.e. classings that have defined openings, peer activities, and predictable transitions) helped maintain order and improved student learning outcomes. In large classes, where the student behavior is more difficult to monitor continuously, these practices are extremely useful. Classroom management

is a particularly complex challenge for pre service teachers. In (2025), Ibrahim et al. investigated 12 pre service EFL teachers during practica sessions in Kurdistan Region. In fact, the average score for classroom management development was moderate, 3.156 out 5 and the most common problems were dealing with disruptive students, managing time, and catering for diverse learner needs. The results suggest that classroom management simulations and reflective practices should be integral to existent practicum programs. Classroom management is becoming more supported by technology incorporation. In a study done by Abdul-Majeed and Muhammad (2023), when the teachers who participated agreed that the digital platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom helped improve student engagement and reduce behavioral disruptions such that 78%. Teachers stated that digital tools enhanced the quizzes, discussion spaces, and multimedia materials to become interactive and manageable as compared with those that do not involve digital tools. However, CLT frameworks are still not known to many teachers although there is definitely a large number of them. Dakhil and Yahya (2022) observed that 65% of surveyed EFL teachers lacked complete training on CLT. They included constraints like outdated textbooks, lack of training modules, and a very rigid national curriculum that focuses more on the performance in examinations than flowing communicative competence. Another complexity is that the Iraqi classrooms are bilingual. The claim depends on native Arabic or Kurdish (L1) to clarify complex topic, especially as it may hinder an adequate English language immersion. Ali (2022) stated that 70% of teachers relies on L1 for classroom management and instruction; it is short term effective, but will be destructive to L2 proficiency. As this duality demonstrates, this tension between on the one hand, practical pedagogy and on the other, linguistic idealism, represents the basis of the results. Al-Khazaali (2021) also pointed out another factor of influencing classroom management which is assessment practices. As most of the Iraqi EFL curricula are based on summative assessments, teachers are under pressure to focus on grammar derivation and translation exercises. This then leads to less time spent on the communicative tasks in creating such interactive learning environments. So, unintentionally the school echoes to many a traditional teacher centered classroom dynamics through the summative assessment system. Finally, the statistical data and the empirical research depicts a thick and complex picture of the EFL classroom management in Iraq. Strategies such as structured routines and technology integration have promise, however, for the most part challenges including, large class sizes, lack of CLT training and driven exam curricula, have limited progress. These issues will have to be addressed through policy and institutional level intervention such as teacher training reform, curriculum modernization and allocation of resources. Only through the continual manifestation of data informed strategies can Iraq's EFL classrooms move from more traditional, to more communicative, inclusive and effective learning spaces.

Study	Sample Size	% Using Preventive Strategies	% Using Supportive Strategies	% Using Corrective Strategies
Ali & Naser (2022)	120 in-service teachers	55%	30%	15%
Hussein & Albakri (2019)	80 EFL teachers	42%	45%	13%
Rajab & Faqi (2018)	19 primary teachers	60%	25%	15%

A clear trend emerges in favor of preventive and supportive approaches, especially among experienced and professionally trained teachers.



Professional Development and Classroom Management (42% correlation):

Influence between professional development programs attended by teachers and their effectiveness in classroom management parameter was found out statistically to be statistically significant ($r = .42$). This suggests that the amount of professional development received accounts for almost half of the variation in classroom management performance. Those teachers who reported undertook the regular training activities in a structured way had a greater confidence in the implementation of communicative strategies, in maintaining discipline and in the fostering of student interaction. What that tells me is, we absolutely need more open and continuous professional learning opportunities — opportunities to learn—and in this case, more specifically about practical classroom uses for CLT.

Supportive Environment and Willingness to Communicate (27.1% correlation):

The data also reports on a significant positive correlation ($r = .271$) between supportive classroom environment and students' willingness to communicate in English (WTC). Trust, encouragement, emotional safety and classrooms are the likely force for motivating students to take linguistic risks, engage in dialogues and participate in interactive activities. As this finding attest, language learning is a psychological process and deserves affective support along with the cognitive or behavioral techniques that have traditionally been central to good classroom management.

Class Size (Average = 35 students; often higher):

In Iranian EFL classrooms, depending on the city, the average class size is around 35 students on average; with most of the urban schools having more than 40 students per class. Overcrowded as these environments are, such communicative tasks as pair work, small group discussions or individualized feedback sessions are not easy to implement. The large size of the class deprives students the opportunity to participate and raises the likelihood of disruptive behavior, forcing teachers to use more traditional, teacher-oriented methods to keep order.

Lack of Familiarity with CLT (65% of Teachers):

Thus, 65 percent of the Iraqi EFL teachers indicate their insufficient knowledge or lack of training in Communicative Language Teaching principles. The widespread unfamiliarity consequently results in outdated and form focused instructional methods even when national curricula suggest communicative competence. A large gap disrupts and limits the practical use of CLT in everyday classroom management and instruction, because the policy does not meet preparedness among practitioners.

Technology and Classroom Management (78% positive perception):

Surveyed about 78% of teachers held that use of technology (multimedia tools, virtual platforms, interactive content) serve to bring positive result in the management of classroom. These tools can provide the opportunities to diversify the instruction, maintain student attention and be beneficial for differentiated learning. Simple digital things like slideshows or audios in under resourced schools have been seen to increase the engagement of a student and reduce behavioral disruptions.

L1 in Classrooms Teachers (70% of Teachers):

Seventy percent of teachers claim to use the students' first language (Arabic or Kurdish) for classroom instruction and discipline. This practice does help students get through texts and lessen confusion in the low proficiency environments however, this also restricts the number of English that students are exposed to. The appealing of L1 in this case reflects a practical bargain whereby keeping order is sacrificed for immersion principles, but also indicates the requirement for more complex training in bilingual pedagogical strategies.

5. Discussion

The actual findings of this review indicate an encouraging trend that Iraqi EFL teachers seem to be heading to making use of proactive and student centered classroom management practices rooted in the CLT principles. Although traditional grammar translation methods continue to prevail in many classrooms, especially in public

primary schools, there is emerging change; in particular, in urban areas, as well as in donor supported schools, a move away from strategies which rely on interaction, fluency, and learner autonomy. This reflects the increased awareness in Iraqi teachers that rote learning is not effective at teaching real world language use and thus pedagogical approaches that facilitate real world use of language are required (Audil & Mustafa, 2023). However, even with these efforts, CLT oriented management strategy is still relatively unwell adopted due to some structural limitations. Despite the development of communicative techniques, overcrowded classrooms, shortage of teaching materials, inappropriate syllabi, and poor teacher training still prevent the realization of the techniques. Because large class sizes of over 40 students typically cannot run group work practice, monitor pair study table time or provide individualised feedback, effective classroom interaction is constrained. According to Rajab and Faqi (2018), such circumstances usually require teachers to turn to the lecture teaching practice rendering the goals of CLT meaningless. Furthermore, training of the teachers both with respect to the pre-service training and in service training gap between pedagogical theory and classroom practice is also remarkable. Iraq's Ministry of Education advocates communicative competence in its English curricula, but most teachers claim to have received almost no training in methodologies of Communicative Language Teaching (Hindi, 2012). Therefore, teachers have no choice but to draw on conventional, discipline-based approaches to discipline, based on matters of grammatical accuracy, and examination preparation. Thus, classrooms become orderly but linguistically unproductive in terms of developing speaking and listening skills. Teachers' strategies to manage communication and maintain discipline in Iraqi classrooms are also determined by the sociolinguistic context of Iraqi classrooms. Teachers often code switch between English and Arabic (or Kurdish, if that is the area in which they work) as a pragmatic way to achieve comprehension and regulate classroom behavior. According to Ali (2022), such bilingual practices are effective at maintaining clarity, though they may unintentionally limit students' English exposure and immersive learning chances by reducing their exposure to English. Clarity and language exposure thus become a pedagogical problem to balance in lower proficiency classrooms where comprehension is routinely a problem. Also, the strong impact teacher beliefs and experience have on the use of corrective feedback strategies. Although CLT discourages excessive correction, direct, immediate correction is considered necessary to prevent fossilization of error and to maintain classroom authority by many Iraqi teachers. Barrak (2023) notes that the selection of the feedback strategy is often dictated by teachers' own educational backgrounds and institutional expectations, which still attach great importance to grammatical correctness. Nevertheless, Hassan and Arslan (2018) indicates that learners generally favour immediate corrective feedback thus, practices of this nature are supported by local learning preferences if judiciously deployed. Compared with teachers without the experience, those who have either attended international workshops or received NGO sponsored training, experience has resulted in the use of more supportive strategies such as scaffolding, praise and role play. The teachers reporting these gains, however, say that interactive methods are a plus when combined with the lessons. In Rezaee et al. (2018), it is demonstrated that scaffolding strategies facilitate Iraqi students' confidence in speaking tasks and promote the transition from the teacher centered classroom to learner centered classroom. Yet such success is spatially limited and depends on the availability of those resources and training to that particular teacher. A major barrier at the administrative level is lack of appropriate support systems. Teachers in under resourced environments, without much professional development, very little administrative support and antiquated textbooks, are very common. Reforms to curricula must be accompanied by teacher education and school infrastructure as per revelations made by Barzinji (2024). Even the most motivated teachers cannot, without systemic change, innovate or be able to manage the communicative classroom. School leaders and policymakers have to accept that efficient reform bridging pedagogical content and delivery mechanisms is required. A significant observation of how assessment systems is observed to influence classroom management. Generally, there are tests of written grammar and vocabulary, and no work is done on speaking or listening skills, in Iraq. Thus, this assessment model determines the priority of the classroom and pressures the teachers to allot instructional time for test preparation rather than communicative activities. Given this, Hussein and Albakri (2019) recommend reflecting communicative competencies in assessment practice, in order not to discourage experimentation with interactive methods in classroom management, unless assessment practices evolve to reflect classroom management based on exam focused teaching. Also, the review emphasises the requirement of more peer collaboration and institutional support for reflective practice. Platforms for teacher sharing of successful strategies for them to adapt to their contexts include peer observation, collaborative lesson planning and professional learning communities. As said by Al-Ani (2019), such communities promote innovation and

resilience, especially in difficult educational settings. Iraqi EFL teachers, when they participate in conversation with colleagues pertaining to reflective discussions, commonly indicate increased confidence and enlarged record of management strategies for CLT. In sum, there is apparent improvement in classroom management practices by Iraqi EFL teachers, however, there are still systemic and contextual barriers that impede the full implementation of communicative strategies. It is necessary for targeting such interventions across multiple levels—to teacher education, curriculum development, assessment reform as well as school leadership, to bridge the gap between what policy mandates and what practice yields. Supporting communicative teaching in Iraqi EFL classrooms will be most beneficial when it is supported not only by the individual efforts of their teachers, but also from the institutional commitment of quality, inclusiveness and innovation.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This conclusive review proves that although Iraqi EFL teachers are well aware of the importance of CLT approaches, the proper application of CLT classroom management strategies is hindered both pedagogic and structural barriers. As described in many studies, the shortage of teaching materials, overcrowded classrooms, the lack of teacher training, and traditional assessment methods that still dominate Iraqi primary schools, as documented across many studies, cause the stagnation of transition of the Iraqi primary school to the learner-centered instruction. While there is a theoretical commitment to CLT, it is not necessarily realized in practice and thus there is a hybrid of teaching environment, where communicative goals are limited by contextual realities. However, Iraqi EFL teachers are able to withstand these hurdles and use different strategies that fit in their classroom requirements. Classroom control is primarily based in large and under resourced classrooms in the form of preventive strategies such as, the establishment of routines, clear behavioral expectations, strategic seating arrangements. But these techniques help teachers to control and build the basis upon which an interactive lesson can be afforded. In particularly progressive environments, educators have increasingly attempted to employ more supportive strategies, such as scaffolding, visual aids and interactive role play, especially if they have received some sort of support through professional development or international collaboration. However, corrective strategies remain prominent, as classrooms that continue to subscribe to traditional pedagogical value this seems to be the case. As a pragmatic response to classroom realities, many Iraqi teachers use frequent and direct feedback and translation as the favored ways of encouraging fluency and communicative confidence rather than excessive correction in the name of CLT. Results from the research suggest that students and their teachers frequently prefer to receive immediate correction as long as it is done constructively. Noting such conflicts between corrective feedback and communicative objectives, this suggests that it is possible to complement, rather than conflict, with communicative objectives. Several strategic interventions that would contribute to the advancement of the effectiveness of EFL classroom management in Iraq are needed. First, the teacher education curricula need to be revised to include a CLT based pedagogical content component with practical management component. Classroom simulation, reflective practice and exposure to modern educational technologies that could support communicative teaching should be made part of pre service programs. Consequently, in services professional development should be more decentralized and accessible and support ought to be delivered in the form of hands-on training in using supportive strategies, cooperative learning methods and formative assessment. Another important area of reform is to reduce the student: teacher ratio. The more manageable size of classrooms enables the use of other communicative tasks such as pair and group work, peer feedback, and real time interaction. Additionally, the investment into such teaching aids (especially those that are culturally and linguistically contextualized) will provide assistance to teachers to deliver more engaging and effective lessons. There should be some resources aimed to closing the linguistic gap without marginalizing the exposure to the English. Policy-level alignment is equally essential. The first need is to shift national assessments to evaluate communicative skills such as listening and speaking, areas which a system tuned to exams has not strongly emphasized in Iraq. When the classroom instruction is related to an assessment model that provides rewards for communicative abilities teachers are more likely to spend time with student centered activities. Simultaneously, administrators and educational leaders need to be trained in ways that would support such reforms through flexible curriculum policies and responsive school leadership practices. Finally, reflective teaching and peer learning culture must be injected. Peer observations, action research and professional learning communities should be encouraged in schools and teacher training institutes through collaboration. More of these platforms allow the educators to try new strategies, share best practices, and improve them by transporting them to the real classrooms. Learning and development of teachers should take place with local research get Y and contextual realities integrated more into it to ensure that strategies are

developed based from the contextual realities, rather than by abstract models. All in all, progress has been seen in the teaching of EFL in Iraq, but—as classroom management practices need to transform—such change needs to be approached through a plurality of reforming lenses, both systemic and pedagogic. The key agents of change are not only the Iraqi EFL teachers but also the Iraqi EFL teachers are the beneficiary of a system that needs to change to meet the needs of communicative, inclusive, and learner centred education. To bridge the gap between CLT ideals and classroom realities that must happen sustained investment in training, policy alignment, infrastructure and reflective practice, so learners are indeed equipped with necessary communicative competence to succeed in a globalised world. Statistical findings do too – 42 percent of classroom management effectiveness is associated with ongoing professional development, and also 78 percent of teachers report that integrating technology in classroom increases classroom behavior and engagement. These data emphasize the need of exploiting evidence-based strategies in the direction of future reforms.

References

- Abdul-Majeed, M. R., & Muhammad, N. M. (2023). Iraqi EFL Teachers' Perspective towards Virtual Platforms in Teaching EFL. *University of Baghdad, College of Education for Women*.
- Al-Ani, W. T. (2019). Enhancing motivation and language use through positive reinforcement in EFL classrooms. *Iraqi Journal of Language Studies*, 3(1), 44–59.
- Ali, E. R. (2022). Teachers' attitudes towards the use of Arabic (L1) in primary EFL classrooms in Iraq. *Al-Adab Journal*, 2(141), 200–214. <https://aladabj.uobaghdad.edu.iq/>
- Ali, E. R. (2022). Teachers' Attitudes towards the Use of Arabic (L1) in Primary EFL Classrooms in Iraq. *Al-Adab Journal*, 1(143), 13–36.
- Ali, N. L. H., & Naser, M. S. (2022). The working experience impact on the Iraqi in-service teachers' perception of managing FL classes. *Special Education*, 42(1), 89–105.
- Aliakbari, M., & Hasoon, A. M. (2022). The Relationship between Iraqi EFL Teachers' Professional Development and Their Classroom Management. *Al-Adab Journal*, 2(141), 63–72.
- Audil, A. F., & Mustafa, H. R. (2023). From theory to classroom: Examining communicative language teaching practices in Iraq. *ResearchGate*. <https://www.researchgate.net>
- Barrak, L. R. S. (2023). Analyzing Iraqi EFL learners' belief about teachers' questioning practices at Open Educational College. *ResearchGate*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368492096>
- Barzinji, P. A. (2024). Implications and insights: A comprehensive review of English language teaching research in Iraqi Kurdistan. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 18(1), 56–72.
- Dakhil, T. A., & Yahya, A. A. (2022). Iraqi EFL Teachers, Supervisors and Students' Perception of CLT Principles and Practices at Iraqi Schools: A Study of Its Benefits, Snags, and Future Directions. *International Journal of Humanities Studies*, 5(2), 45–60.
- Farvabar, M., & Kamyabigol, A. (2023). EFL teachers' error-correction strategies in speaking classes: A study of experienced and novice Iraqi teachers' perceptions. *ResearchGate*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368492096>
- Hassan, A. W., & Arslan, F. Y. (2018). A comparative study on Iraqi EFL teachers' and learners' preferences of corrective feedback in oral communication. *BUEFAD*, 7(3), 765–785. <https://doi.org/10.14686/buefad.378117>
- Hindi, N. M. (2012). Problems faced by Iraqi English language teachers in managing communicative language classroom in primary schools [Master's thesis, University of Diyala]. *University of Diyala Repository*. <http://repo.uodiyala.edu.iq/>
- Hussein, N. O., & Albakri, I. (2019). The role of strategies on developing Iraqi learners' usage of request in EFL classroom. *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Science*, 4(6), 1234–1240.
- Ibrahim, M. S., Ahmed, N. F., & Mohammad, M. H. (2025). Exploring Classroom Management Challenges and Strategies among Kurdish Pre-Service Teachers: A Case Study at Soran University. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 8(1), 1–13.
- Karam, H. G. (2022). The Management of Classroom Routines in Iraqi EFL University Teaching from Instructors' Viewpoint. *Journal of Education College Wasit University*, 3(46), 511–620.
- Obaid, A. A., Zeraatpishe, M., & Faravani, A. (2022). On the Interrelationships between Iraqi EFL Learners' Classroom Environment, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and Willingness to Communicate: A SEM Approach. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 5(2), 143–156.

- Rajab, F. M., & Faqi, C. K. (2018). An investigation of classroom management challenges faced by English language teachers at primary schools of Iraqi Kurdistan region. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(21), 12–19.
- Rezaee, A. A., Khomeijani Farahani, A. A., & Marandi, S. S. (2018). Scaffolding and EFL learners' use of language learning strategies in the Iraqi language teaching context. *Teaching English Language*, 12(2), 45–65.

المصادر

- عبد المجيد، م. ر.، ومحمد، ن. م. (2023). وجهة نظر معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية العراقيين تجاه المنصات الافتراضية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. جامعة بغداد، كلية التربية للبنات.
- الأنبي، و. ت. (2019). (تعزيز الدافعية واستخدام اللغة من خلال التعزيز الإيجابي في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية ، 1(3)، 44–59.
- علي، ع. ر. (2022). (مواقف المعلمين تجاه استخدام اللغة العربية) اللغة الأم (في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية الابتدائية في العراق. مجلة <https://aladabj.uobaghdad.edu.iq/> (الآداب، 2(141)، 200–214.
- علي، ع. ر. (2022). (مواقف المعلمين تجاه استخدام اللغة العربية) اللغة الأم (في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية 1(143)، 13–36.
- علي، ن. ل. ه.، وناصر، م. س. (2022). (أثر الخبرة العملية على تصورات المعلمين العراقيين أثناء الخدمة في إدارة فصول اللغة الأجنبية التربية الخاصة، 1(42)، 89–105.
- علي أكبرى، م.، وحسون، ع. م. (2022). (العلاقة بين التطوير المهني لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيين وإدارتهم للفصول الدراسية. مجلة الآداب، 2(141)، 63–72.
- ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net> (ع. ف.، ومصطفى، ه. ر.) (2023).
- بازك، ل. ر. س. (2023). (تحليل معتقدات متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيين حول ممارسات المعلمين في طرح الأسئلة في كلية التربية المفتوحة ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368492096>
- بارزنجي، ب. أ. (2024). (التأثيرات والرؤى: مراجعة شاملة لأبحاث تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في كردستان العراق ، 1(18)، 56–72.
- دخيل، ت. أ.، ويحيى، ع. أ. (2022). (وجهات نظر معلمي ومشرفي وطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيين حول مبادئ وممارسات التدريس التواصلي في المدارس العراقية: دراسة لفوائدها ومعوقاتهما وتوجهاتها المستقبلية. المجلة الدولية لدراسات العلوم الإنسانية، 5(2)، 45–60.
- فروهر، م.، وكاميابيغل، ع. (2023). (استراتيجيات تصحيح الأخطاء لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في دروس المحادثة: دراسة لآراء المعلمين ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368492096>
- حسن، ع. و.، وأرسلان، ف. ي. (2018). (دراسة مقارنة لتفضيلات المعلمين والمتعلمين العراقيين لتغذية التصحيح الراجعة في التواصل الشفهي BUEFAD، 7(3)، 765–785. <https://doi.org/10.14686/buefad.378117>
- هندي، ن. م. (2012). (المشكلات التي يواجهها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيون في إدارة الفصول التواصلية في المدارس الابتدائية [رسالة <http://repo.uodiyala.edu.iq/> ماجستير، جامعة ديالى. [مستودع جامعة ديالى
- حسين، ن. ع.، والبكري، إ. (2019). (دور الاستراتيجيات في تطوير استخدام الطلب لدى المتعلمين العراقيين في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية. المجلة الدولية للغة الإنجليزية والأدب والعلوم الاجتماعية، 4(6)، 1234–1240.
- إبراهيم، م. س.، أحمد، ن. ف.، ومحمد، م. ح. (2025). (استكشاف تحديات واستراتيجيات إدارة الصف لدى المعلمين المتدربين الأكراد: دراسة حالة في جامعة سوران. مجلة تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية التعليمية، 1(8)، 1–13.
- كريم، ه. ج. (2022). (إدارة الروتين الصففي في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات العراقية من وجهة نظر المحاضرين - 3(46)، 511–620.
- عبيد، ع. ع.، زراعت بيته، م.، وفرافاني، أ. (2022). (حول العلاقات بين بيئة الصف لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية العراقيين، وقلق تعلم اللغة. مجلة تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية التعليمية، 5(2)، 143–156. (SEM) الأجنبية، والاستعداد للتواصل: منهج تحليل النماذج الهيكلية
- رجب، ف. م.، وفقى، ج. ك. (2018). (تحقيق في التحديات التي يواجهها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية في إدارة الصفوف، 9(21)، 12–19.
- رضائي، ع. ع.، خميجاني فراهاني، ع. ع.، ومارندي، س. س. (2018). (الدعم التعليمي واستخدام استراتيجيات تعلم اللغة لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في سياق التدريس العراقي. تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، 12(2)، 45–65.