Problems Confronted By EFL Teachers in Applying The Communicative Approach in Iraqi Secondary Schools (2002 – 2013)
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Abstract

Since the academic year 2002–2003 , English language teaching in Iraq has adopted the communicative approach . This means that speaking skill is at the forefront of English teaching practice which has led to a focus on communicative ability and appropriateness of language use , over linguistic accuracy and error avoidance .

This study aims at eliciting EFL teachers' views concerning the optimal number of students and the groups in each class , the optimal number of students in each group , and discussing the group work , the criterion of group structure , error correction , teacher's role , student's role , the large number of students in each classroom , the serious shortage of school buildings , the instability of syllabuses designed according to this approach and the distribution of marks .

In this study , open and closed questionnaires were used as investigatory instruments . Furthermore , the questionnaires were supplemented by oral interviews .

Finally , relevant recommendations are made .

1.1 Introduction

The world has rapidly witnessed expansion and development in all fields of life , especially in the English speaking countries . Therefore , English has dominated as a second or foreign language all over the world and it has become one of the most important languages used in international cooperation and international organizations .

Logically , ELT methodology has received a lot of attention . Methodology has strong relationships with many sciences , especially with linguistics , psychology , pedagogy , and sociology . Therefore , any development in those sciences will positively result in development and changes in methodology . For instance , syllabuses and methods of teaching this language continuously change in the process of time when our societies develop and our needs , wants and desires change . Another example , that is the rapid development of linguistics as an independent discipline in the recent decades of the previous century has made a great impact on methodology .
(Davies and Pearse 2000 : 195)

Consequently , we can say whenever the definition of language is changed , a new method of teaching appears . For instance , the Grammar–Translation Method was built on the definition "Language is a set of words

and rules" , Thus , Learners[1] were provided with long lists of words with their meanings in their native language and they were also provided with detailed explanation of the linguistic rules with their examples , while the Audio–Lingual Method was built on the definition "Language is habit–formation" . As a result , it is believed that learners learn language best through mimicry and repetition . Finally , the communicative Approach (henceforth C.A.) is built on the definition "Language is the best means of human communication" .

The C.A. (Ibid : 193) grew out of new theories of language and language learning that developed in the 1960s and 1970s in Britain , the USA and elsewhere . It (Cook 2008 : 252) puts more weight on social communication , rather than as text , or grammatical rules or patterns . The philosophy behind this principle is that language is interpersonal activity . It is basically used for forming relationships with people and for interrelating with them , ie , using language means meeting people and talking to them .

The C.A. recommends using authentic materials which can reinforce for learners the direct relation between the language used in the classroom and that used in the outside the world .

The new trend in methodology has turned the principles of the ancient methods upside down . It changes the roles of both teachers and learners inside the classroom , it adopts a new attitude towards error treatment , it takes learners' interests into consideration as a psychological dimension and it emphasizes on communicative competence rather than linguistic competence .

Stern (1983 : 344) states that communicative competence manifests itself in language behaviour in listening and speaking whereas linguistic competence manifests itself in reading and writing . Thus , oral tests are essential to elicit learners, communicative competence .

In the C.A. , the learners' role is changed . They should be involved in language teaching . They can cooperate and interact with their mates to discover , for instance , linguistic rules by themselves or with the help of their teacher . This point reminds us of the Chinese proverb which says "I hear and I forget , I see and I remember , but when I do , I understand" .

And last but not least , this upheaval has rapidly swept the field of teaching English all over the world and has become the most fashionable style in teaching English nowadays .

1.2 Problem of The Study

English teachers and trainees usually complain that there is a huge gap between the theoretical framework of the C.A. and the actual teaching situation where this theoretical framework is implemented , ie , it does not accord with the teaching reality they work in . They commonly spark a

lively discussion about applying this new approach with some positive and also many negative reactions .

1.3 Aim of The Study

This study aims at identifying and describing the problems and obstacles confronted by English teachers in attempting to apply the C.A. in Iraqi Secondary Schools . Diagnosis of such problems and obstacles is crucial for future success .

1.4 Limits of The Study

This study is limited to the application of the C.A. in Iraqi Secondary Schools during the period from the academic years (2002–2003) to (2012–2013) .

1.5 Historical Background

It is naïve to expect that the application of the C.A. in Iraqi schools which applied the audio–lingual method for a long time is easy , especially when we live in exceptional circumstances .

English was taught according to the principles of the audio – lingual method for 39 years (1974–2013) when the syllabus called "The New English Course for Iraq" (NECI) by Dr. Khalil Hamash was designed . The syllabus was a seris of eight books . Book –1– was put in use in the academic year (1974–1975) and Book 8 was out of use in the academic year (2013–2014) .

At the beginning of the 21st century , two pressing requirements were felt : the first was to change the ELT syllables into a new one and the other was to adopt a new method . Therefore , the C.A. (Al–Azzawi 2005 : 7) as the mainstream of ELT was first applied in the academic year (2002–2003) when Book –1– (for the 5th grade of the primary stage) of the Iraqi locally produced series by Dr. Abdul–Jabbar Ali Darwesh which was called "Rafidain English Course For Iraq" (RECI) was put in use . But the necessary conditions of the application that syllabus were not available at that time due to the lot of difficulties arising from the economic sanctions and embargo imposed on Iraq .

After the political changes on the 9th of April , 2003 RECI was abolished and NECI which was designed on the audio-lingual method was put in use again .

In the academic year (2008–2009) another series based on the C.A. called "Iraq Opportunity" by Michael Harris and others was put in use for the first intermediate grade .

In the academic year (2012–2013) "Iraq Opportunity" for the fifth secondary grade was replaced by a new Iraqi locally produced book which bears the title "Learn 4 Iraq" by Dr. Abdel-Wahed M. Muslet and others .

In the academic year (2012–2014) two books of a new series which is called "English For Iraq" by Olivia Johnston and Caroline de Messieres

designed on the principles of the C.A. were put in use for 5th and 6th secondary grades .

It is worth mentioning here that in designing any series of syllabuses , the ascending order should be followed , ie , it should begin from the primary stage . All the said series did not follow this principle except two : NECI and RECI .

From the above–mentioned review , we can conclude that there is no stability in the Iraqi syllabuses of English which were designed on the principles of the C.A. during the period (2003–2014) . This has certainly reflected negatively on the teaching learning process and caused confusion for both teachers and learners .

1.6 Language within a Context

In the C.A. , language should be taught within contexts of real–life situations . It should not be isolated from its environment , ie , the place , the time or even the mood of the speaker . Therefore , it can be well understood and appreciated when it is in a context , but it is ambiguous when it is out of it .

Consequently , it is obvious that most people tend to see plays on theatres rather than to see them on TV . They enjoy them on theatres because they live with their real situations .

If we take the following example out of the context , the correct option can be either (b) or (c) :

Mr. Ali is …………. teacher of English .

    a. an   b. a   c. the

But if we take it within the following contact , the option (c) is the correct one .

- Who is the teacher of English ?
- Mr. Ali is …………… teacher of English .

  a. an   b. a   c. the

Now , let's take another example in which the meaning is ambiguous , if we ignore the time in which the sentences are said :-

" This is the best writing surface" .

This refers to "paper" if we talk about the present time , but if we talk about the ancient time when societies were primitive , this may refer to "a tablet of clay" on "a skin of a certain animal" which were used to writing on .

Here are other examples which show the importance of another dimension which is "a place" .

  a. Adil passed the exam in Arabic . He got 55 marks .
  b. Barakat did not pass the exam in Arabic . He got 55 marks.

In the example (a) , Adil may be an Iraqi student . In Iraq , the passing mark of Arabic is (50) , whereas in the example (b) , Barakat may be a Yemeni student . In Yemen , the passing mark of Arabic is 60 .

1.7 Speaking Skill

In the communicative point of view , the four language skills should work in every period , but the priority should be given to speaking due to the principle that language is basically oral .

Students cannot be compelled to speak or communicate ; therefore , creating a good atmosphere for real communication depends on the teachers who should be culturally , linguistically and professionally qualified . As far as the researcher's knowledge , in Yemen and Libya , the syllabuses of English have been designed according to the principles of the C.A. , but the teachers are not qualified to teach communicatively ; they teach structurally .

Consequently , highly competent teachers , who can innovate a variety of ways to activate their students , can play a vital role in encouraging their students to participate in the classroom activities . They can :

a. Let their students be familiar with some real–life expressions , for instance :-

1. When the teacher did not hear or understand what a student has said , s / he can say "Pardon ?" .

2. When the teacher knows it is one of his / her student's birthday , s / he can say "happy Returns" .

3. When the teacher enters the classroom at the beginning of the new year , s / he can say "Happy New Year" .

4. When the teacher sneezes , s / he can say "Excuse me".

5. When the teacher is late , s / he can say : "I am sorry to be late . It was the ………. . (traffic , rain , bus) .

b. exploit real events to stimulate their students to speak . Such situations provide a real opportunity for them to use English naturally and communicatively , for instance :

1. If there was a football match on TV yesterday , you can ask :

- Did you watch the football match yesterday ?

 Who won ? What was the result ?

2. If your students took an examination in physics , you can ask :

- What is your opinion of the physics exam ?

Do you face difficulties ? Why ? Do you think it is necessary for you to join a course in physics .

Now , what about oral tests , especially speaking ?

Oral tests (Steven 1983 : 344) are essential to elicit students , communicative competence . But to test speaking , especially with large classes is very difficult . With speaking , students must be tested in turns

and that takes time , whereas with listening , reading and writing , students can all be tested at the same time . (Doff 1988 : 266) .

Although in the C.A. , the priority is given to speaking rather than writing , in Iraqi examinations , the priority is given to writing . Oral tests are completely neglected in the ministerial examinations , but in mid–year and monthly examinations are given 20 marks out of 100 (see the appendix No (3) . The distribution of marks set by the Iraqi Ministry of Education) .

From the above–mentioned appendix , we can also see that pronunciation is completely neglected . This is illogical in learning a foreign language when students deal with that language only inside the classroom and their teachers are not native speakers . Students , even after graduation , need to consult their dictionaries to see the phonetic transcription of the words they confront in order to know how to pronounce them .

1.8 Error and Mistake Treatment

First of all , we have to make a distinction between two terms used in methodology : error and mistake . **An error** is a failure to utilize a known linguistic system correctly , ie , a deficiently in language system while **a mistake** refers to performance . People make mistakes in both native and second / foreign language situations . Mistakes are caused by lack of attention , fatigue or carelessness . They can be self – corrected when attention is called to speakers , while errors cannot be self–corrected (Razmjoo 2011 . 187–188) .

Error treatment or correction varies according to the method adopted in teaching , for instance , in the audio–lingual method, errors are seen as a result of the first language interference and they should be avoided or corrected immediately if they occur to maintain accuracy .

In the C.A. , errors are seen as a natural outcome of the development of the communicative skills . Therefore , teachers should be tolerant of their students' errors and make no breakdown in the flow of communication to maintain fluency . So only major or global errors should be corrected because they result in incomprehensible sentences and block communication , while local or minor errors which affect a form or structure can be left to another occasion , or returned later with accuracy–based activity . (Ibid : 180) and (Horwitz 2008 : 103) .

What will happen if teachers interrupt their students and correct every error or mistake they make ?

Teachers should not embarrass their students and put them in the spotlight when they make errors or mistakes . This is a psychological dimension . If they interrupt them and correct every error or mistake they make , students will never participate in the class activities because they do not want to lose their faces in front of their mates . If they are put on the

spot , they may tend to speak their own language instead or they will not attend classes .

Concerning mistakes , there are some common mistakes which students always make , especially "third person–s" and irregular verbs . Such mistakes are natural outcomes in learning process from the communicative point of view .

Many teachers find it helpful to prepare a large card containing nothing but a very letter "s" . When a student makes a third person "s" mistake , the teacher , without speaking , raises the card to remind him / her of the mistake ; other teachers have a large "s" on the wall of their classrooms and they simply point to it .

Another card reminds students of irregular forms when they produce a sentence such as " I buyed this shirt yesterday" .
(Lewis and Hill 1985 : 83)

Another way of correction is that teachers can repeat and correct the error(s) in an elegant way . They can repeat correctly what their students have said incorrectly , for example :

1) S : I buyed this shirt yesterday .
T : You mean you bought this shirt yesterday .
2) S : He sing well .
T : You mean he sings well .
3) S : He travelled an hour ago to Erbil .
T : You mean he travelled to Erbil an hour ago .
4) S : I enjoy to watch TV .
T : Yes , I enjoy watching TV. , too .

1.9 School Buildings

Diyala Governorate suffers from a grave shortage of school buildings due to the military operations from 2003 until now . Some of the school buildings are not fit to be used as schools , particularly in outlying villages , any many of them are inappropriate : they have few classrooms which are rather small, and usually overcrowded with students .

Nearly all of the buildings are occupied by two or three schools and the number of the students in most of them ranges from 40 to 50 in each classroom .

If a building is occupied by two schools , the length of time for each period is 40 minutes (see Table –1–) Thus , each student is given only one minute or less in classroom participation each period . Obviously , teachers do not have enough time to provoke all their students to speak .

Table –1–
School buildings and Teaching Time

Buildings	Time	Time for	Breaks

occupied by		each period	
1- one school	8 a.m ➜ 1:30 p.m	45 min.	All are ten–minute breaks , except one which is twenty–minute break.
2- two schools	8 a.m ➜ 12.25 p.m 12:30 ➜ 4:50 p.m	40 min.	Five–minute breaks .
3- three schools	8 a.m ➜ 11 a.m 11 a.m ➜ 2 p.m 2 p.m ➜ 5 p.m	35 min.	Five–minute breaks .

From the table above , we can say that school buildings play a decisive role in teaching – learning process . If this problem is solved , many of the difficulties confronted by both teachers and school administrations will end and the obstacles will be removed .

Moreover , the existing situation prevents schools from practising any of after–school activities .

1.10 Pair and Group work

It is impossible for successful teachers to adhere to a single strategy due to the variety of activities used in each period . Some activities are well done individually , while others are well done in pair work or group work or whole–class discussion led by the teacher .

Pair and group work (Nunan 2003 ; 209) are a hallmark of the communicative classroom . They entail the discussion or exchange of information related to the context . In pair or group work , language teacher should :

a. present the task , then divides learners and sets a time limit for completion of that task .

b. while the learners work , the teacher has to circulate to answer questions and make sure that the learners are "on task" has to notice that the learners do well and guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context . If they fail , they can check the meaning from a dictionary or call on their teacher "the walking dictionary" as s/he is sometimes described .

c. avoid getting involved in working closely with a group , and (Scriver 1994 : 10)

d. at the end of the task , learners from each group can share their ideas or solutions with the rest of the class . They can act as editors with reading each other work . (Hedge 2000 : 62)

The philosophy behind dividing the class into pair or group work is to minimize teacher talking time (TTT) and maximize student talking time (STT) , reduce students' inhibition about speaking in front of the whole class and involve them in face–to–face encounter in order to develop their ability in the target language .

Logically , small groups are more convenient and favoured than big ones , especially for those who are disinclined to participate in front of the whole class . (Harmer 2007 : 162)

Many teachers complain that pair and group work face extreme opposition by school administrations because of the noise and misbehaviour the students make during this teaching style . (Personal Communication)

Now , how are teachers going to put their students in groups? What are the criterion or norms they can use in group structure ? Here are some ways :

1. They can put friends with friends . The purpose is to avoid risking the possibility of students working with others whom they find difficult or unpleasant .
2. They can ask their students to form groups of four , for example . This may cause chaos .
3. They can elicit their students' likes and dislikes and write the names of each group on pieces of paper to avoid the waste of time .
4. They can choose their students' name by a lottery . For example , when there are five groups of four , teachers can choose five sets of different colourful cards and distribute them randomly . (personal experience)
5. They can choose them according to their ability in the target language . Each group should have a mixture of weaker and stronger students . The demerit of this kind of structure is that weaker students become reliant on the stronger ones .
6. They can group their students by chance without pre–planning . This is the easiest one .
7. They can select students on personality characteristics or experience . For example , shy students can be matched with shy , talkative students with those who are talkative or fluent students with those who are fluent .

In order to make groups more dynamic and enjoyable , teachers must change the members of groups and not let them stay in their groups until the end .
(Harmer : 2007 : 168–171) , (Gebhard : 2006 : 87) and (Mc Donough and Shaw 2003 : 200) .

1.11 Communicative Teaching

The principal features of the communicative teaching can be summarized in the following points which are taken from the literature written on the C.A. . This can form a good idea about how to teach communicatively .

1. Learning is an individual process , ie , learners should be given sufficient opportunities to express their individualities .
2. Learning is a social process , ie , learners should work in pairs and groups . They learn more by doing things by themselves rather than by being told about them .
3. The teachers should avoid frontal teaching (lecturing) . They should minimaze TTT and maximize STT . This aim can be achieved by using "pair work" and "group work" .
4. Error correction should be kept to a minimum to maintain fluency . Teachers can give their students the chance to correct themselves .
5. The native language , Arabic , should be used in some rare occasions when the teachers want to explain a difficult point or an abstract word . or idea . The aim is to save time and effort .
6. All the four language skills should be practised in every lesson , but the priority should be given to speaking , ie , the lion's share is for speaking or real communication .
7. Grammar should be taught implicitly . Teachers can give their students a brief rule if it is necessary .
8. The teachers should make their lessons interesting and enjoyable . They can use a variety of activities including games and songs and they have to take their students' interests into consideration .
9. The teachers should avoid criticizing and embarrassing their students in front of their classmates . Students always need encouragement .
10. The teachers should give all their students equal opportunities in participation and not allow good students to dominate the class or monopolize conversation and make weaker ones feel neglected .
11. The teachers should be friendly with their students and establish democratic traditions in class . They should maintain a healthy relationship with them . Establishing rapport with the class is a primary goal and teaching is secondary . Concerning this point , there should be a certain distance between the teachers and their students . Our duty as teachers is to keep this distance for the benefit of the teaching process .
12. Students are not listeners or imitators as in the ancient methods , but they are partners in the teaching / learning process .
13. The teachers are helpers , advisors , facilitators and organizers of the activities .

1.12 Procedures

In order to achieve the aim of the study , the following procedural measures were followed :-

1.12.1 Open Questionnaire

At the end of Aug and the beginning of Sep. , 2012 , the Directorate General of Education in Diyala Government (hence–forth D.G.E) opened two ten – day courses for EFL teachers in Baquba and Al–Muqdadia . The total number of the participants were 80 teachers (40 teachers in each) . The researcher , who was a lecturer in those courses , excluded those who did not teach the syllabus designed on the C.A. . Thus , the remaining number (the sample) was 45 teachers (22 teachers from Baquba and 23 teachers from Al–Muqdadia) . Then the questionnaire was distributed to them to elicit their views concerning the optimal number of students in the communicative class , the optimal number of the groups in each class and the optimal number of students in each group . (see the appendix : 1)

1.12.2 Closed Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher and exposed to a jury[2] of eight elite EFL teachers to decide the appropriateness and suitability of its items and to pass judgement concerning the face and content validities . Their suggestions and modifications were taken in designing the final version . In the academic year 2012–2013 , the final version was distributed to EFL teachers to give their opinions on the application of the C.A. in Iraqi secondary schools . (see the appendix : 2)

1.12.3 Population and Sample

A- Open Questionnaire

Table –2–
The sample of the Open Questionnaire

Population	Sample (participants)	Percentage
750	45	6 %

The population of the open questionnaire is EFL teachers at the secondary schools in the centre of Baquba and Al – Muqdadia . The total number of them are (750) teachers .

The sample was randomly taken with an average of six percent of the population . Therefore , the participants are (45) teachers .

B- Closed Questionnaire

Table –3–
The sample of the Closed Questionnaire

Population	Sample (participants)	Percentage
555	36	7 %

The population of the closed questionnaire is EFL teachers at the secondary schools in the centre of Baquba and its outskirt. The total number of them are (555) teachers .

The sample was randomly taken with an average of seven percent of the population . Therefore , the participants are (36) teachers .

1.13 Analysis of Results

A- The Open Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to the teachers to elicit their views as the applicators . Then , their answers were collected and processed statistically by using percentage as shown in the following table .

Table –4–
The Percentage of the Results Obtained

Respondents	Q1 Students	Q2 Groups	Q3 Students in each group	Percentage
31	20	5	4	69 %
7	25	5	5	15.5 %
5	30	6	5	11.1 %
2	15	5	3	4.4 %

The table reveals that 69 % of the participants agree that the optimal number of students in each class should be (20) , the optimal number of the groups in each class should be (5) and the optimal number of students in each group should be (4) .

B- The Closed Questionnaire

The data was collected , tabulated and statistically processed by using weighted mean (henceforth W.M.) and percentile weight (henceforth P.W.) to get at the results . The results are put in descending order . (see Table 5)

Table –5–
Statistics of the Items

No. of items	Rank	W.M.	P.W.
7	1	3.33	83.33
8	2	3.25	81.25
16	3	3.16	79.16
2	4	2.94	73.62
12	5	2.91	72.91
14	6	2.88	72.22
11	7	2.86	71.52
9	8	2.83	70.83
10	9	2.77	69.44
6	10	2.77	69.42
5	11	2.69	67.36

13	12	2.66	66.66
15	13	2.61	65.27
3	14	2.19	54.25
4	15	2.16	54.16
1	16	2.11	52.77

1.14 Discussion of The Results

1. Item No (7) which reads "I suffer from the lack of the teaching aids "occupies the first rank . It got a W.M. (3.33) and a P.W. (83.33) . This indicates that the C.A. cannot be practised successfully unless the classroom is provided with the necessary teaching aids such as maps , real objects , pictures , charts , flashcards , films and cassettes . In the C.A. , teaching is achieved through using visual presentations of information .

2. Item No (8) which reads "Teaching English according to the communicative approach requires a separate classroom" occupies the second rank . It got a W.M. (3.25) and a P.W. (81.25) . This indicates that teaching English according to the C.A. requires a specific classroom just like the labs of physics , chemistry , and biology . The aim is to manage the students' seating because the said approach necessitates that the class should be divided into several small groups . Moreover , the teaching aids , technologies such as videos , computers , overhead projectors , MP3 , cassette recorders and dictionaries will be at the hands of both the teachers and their students .

3. Item No (16) which reads "Grammar is taught explicitly , students are provided with detailed linguistic rules together with examples" occupies the third rank . It got a W.M. mean (3.16) and P.W. (79.16) . This indicates that most teachers misunderstand how to teach the grammar according to the principles of the C.A. Grammar should be taught implicitly . Students can elicit grammatical structures from written and spoken texts .

4. Item No (2) which reads "I suffer from the large number of students inside the classroom" occupies the fourth rank . It got a W.M. (2.94) , and a P.W. (73.62) . This indicates that the large number of students impedes the application of the C.A. effectively . It is a burden on the

teachers which usually results in huge individual differences linguistically and behaviourally . When the classroom is crammed with students , the teacher cannot divide the class into small groups , and students do not have sufficient chances to speak .

5. Item No (12) which reads "My students understand better when I follow the new method "occupies the fifth rank . It got a W.M. mean (2.91) , and a P.W. (72.91) . This indicates that the teachers are in favour of teaching English according to the C.A. than the ancient methods and their students prefer it , too .

6. Item No (14) which reads "In communicative language teaching my students are in high–anxiety temperament and are hesitant" It got a W.M. (2.88) and a P.W. (72.22) . This indicates that most of the teachers give the lion's share to individual work while pair and group work are ignored or slighted . One way to reduce anxiety about speaking is to use pair and group work . Several studies have found that students feel more comfortable communicating with a partner or in a small group than in front of the whole class. (Horwitz 2008 : 103–104)

Another solution to this problem is that teachers should avoid criticizing and embarrassing their students in front of the class .

7. Item No (11) which reads "Technologies (e.g. videos , computers , overhead projectors , MP3 , cassette–recorders, etc.) play a central role in communicative language teaching" occupies the seventh rank . It got a W.M. (2.86) , and a P.W. (71.52) .

This indicates that the use of technological devices in teaching / learning process is very important , not a passing fashion , especially in the C.A. . They have made a positive impact on language teaching , and have become an integral part of language teacher's equipment .

Leaning is usually stimulated when they are used to break the routine activities . In some specific teaching situations , a picture is more effective than a word .

8. Item No (9) which reads "The students are motivated and enthusiastic to learn according to the new approach" occupies the eighth rank . It got a W.M. (2.83) and a P.W. (70.83) . This result indicates that the students are eager to get rid of the routine style of the previous teaching and that the communicative style creates a

healthy atmosphere inside the classroom and a high motivation on the part of most students .

9. Item No (10) which reads "There is a pressing need for long in–service teacher–training courses in order to for the teacher to teach better according to the new method" occupies the ninth rank . It got a W.M. (2.77) and a P.W. (69.44) . This result indicates that there is a need for better designed teacher–training courses because most of the teachers are products of grammar–based language classes. Realistically , it is evident that teacher–training is effective in actual teaching situations and trained teachers can spark their students' interest in the class .

The most promising method does not work well and produce the best result unless there is a qualified teacher . To be qualified and successful , there are three ways : pre–service training , in–service training and self–development.

10. Item No (6) which reads "My role as a teacher is a facilitator of communication , advisor and negotiator" occupies the tenth rank . It got a W.M. (2.77) and a P.W. (69.42) . This indicates that most of the language teachers considerably know their new role in the teaching process and they do their best to establish democratic traditions of negotiation and giving advice and to create a positive atmosphere for interaction .

1.15 Conclusion
1. From (2002) to (2013) , the communicative syllabuses were changeable (period of instability) , and they did not follow the ascending order as series and that caused confusion especially to teachers .
2. There is a need for an educational conference to start deliberations on the problems and obstacles confronted EFL teachers on implementing this approach .
3. The actual teaching situation affirms that the teachers of English confront a lot of problems in applying the principles of the C.A. .
4. There is a grave shortage of school buildings .
5. The classrooms in the secondary schools are overcrowded with students .
6. There is no separate classroom for teaching English equipped with the necessary technological devices .

7. STT in classroom participation and communication is very little .
8. Pronunciation and phonetic symbols are not included in exams .
9. In exams , the heavy emphasis is on writing , not on speaking .
10. Teachers need qualification on methodology .
11. Many teachers of English face extreme opposition by their school administrations because pair work and group work cause a lot of noise which disturb other students in other classrooms .

1.16 Recommendations

1- Concerning syllabuses , the teaching / learning process is in need for a period of stability and each series should follow an ascending order from the primary stage to the preparatory stage .

2- Realistically , teachers cannot follow the theoretical principles of any method or approach strictly . They have to move from idealized view to realistic view . They can select techniques from all methods that suit their students' individual differences and their specific teaching situation . Practice is the arena where teachers prove themselves .

3- Quick procedures ought to be taken by the Government for building more and appropriate schools all over the country .

4- The problem of school buildings is very difficult to be solved by the Government only ; therefore , it is wise to encourage the private sector to take part in solving this problem on condition that tuition fees should be decided by the Ministry of Education.

5- In order to increase STT , the maximum number should not exceed 20 students in each class .

6- A separate classroom should be specified by school administration for teaching English and equipped with the necessary technological devices , maps , teaching aids , etc , and furnished with chairs and tables for group work .

7- Pronunciation and phonetic symbols ought to be included in exams .

8- Increasing the number of competent specialist supervisors of English to ensure better application of the C.A. .

9- Increasing demonstration lessons to provide teachers with a good grounding of the application of the communicative teaching .

10- More attention should be paid to pre–service training and in–service training .

11- Humour , encouragement and praise are useful and effective tools used by teachers to make their students interactive and less hesitant .

12- Teachers have to share experience and ideas with their colleagues as a necessary step for professional development .

13- Teachers should avoid writing hand–outs , or let their students bring any to classrooms .

14- Teachers should keep error correction to a minimum and avoid criticizing and embarrassing their students in order to let them gain confidence and take part in the class activities without fear .

15- In order to encourage English teachers to follow the principles of the C.A. and avoid teaching structurally , exam results should not be the only stickyard by which the teachers are judged .

16- Teachers have to avoid using Arabic in teaching , and not let their students do that , either .

17- English teachers can recommend some of the sites that are available online for their students .

18- Teachers can appoint a chairperson or leader for each group to ensure better work of the groups and let students work quietly.

Endnotes

 (1) The researcher uses "students" when he talks about secondary schools , but he uses "learner" when he talks in general , about all the stages of education .

 (2) The members of the jury are :

  1. Prof. Khalil Ismail Al – Hadidi (Ph.D) College of Education , University of Diyala .

  2. Anwar Faraj : Al – Marqaziyah Preparatory School for Boys .

  3. Hamid A. Sultan : Al – Marqaziyah Preparatory School for Boys .

  4. Ahmed Sabri : Al – Sharif Al – Radhi Preparatory School for Boys .

  5. Ali Mahmood : Al – Sharif Al – Radhi Preparatory School for Boys .

  6. Mahmood Hassan : Al – Sharif Al – Radhi Preparatory School for Boys .

  7. Ahmed Namma : Al – Ma'arif Preparatory School for Boys .

  8. Mahmood Jalal : Al – Ma'arif Preparatory School for Boys.

Appendices :

Appendix (1) Open Questionnaire

Q1 What is the optimal number of students in each class ?

Q2 What is the optimal number of groups in each class ?

Q3 What is the optimal number of students in each group ?

Appendix (2) Questionnaire For EFL Teachers

1- The time of the period covers all activities .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

2- I suffer from the large number of students inside the classroom .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

3- My students have little opportunity to express themselves and to communicate with me and with their classmates .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

4- In teaching , I divide the class into several small groups .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

5- My students are partners in the teaching process , not passive listeners or imitators .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

6- My role as a teacher is a facilitator of communication , advisor and negotiator .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

7- I suffer from the lack of the teaching aids .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

8- Teaching English according to the communicative approach requires a separate classroom .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

9- The students are motivated and enthusiastic to learn according to the new approach .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

10- There is a pressing need for long in–service teacher–training courses in order for the teacher to teach better according to the new method .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

11- Technologies (e.g videos , computers , overhead projectors , MP3 , cassette–recorders …. etc) play a central role in communicative language teaching .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐ quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

12- My students understand better when I follow the new method in teaching .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐ quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

13- I immediately correct all the errors my students make when they speak or read .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐ quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

14- In communicative language teaching , my students are in high – anxiety temperament and are hesitant .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐ quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

15- The four skills go together in each period , but the priority is to speaking .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐ quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

16- Grammar is taught explicitly , students are provided with detailed linguistic rules together with examples .

☐quite agree   ☐agree   ☐ quite disagree   ☐disagree fully

Thank you for your cooperation

Instructor
Nataq T . Abdul – Kareem

Appendix (3)
Ministry of Education   General Directorate of Curriculum

English for Iraq–Sixth Preparatory Class (2013–2014)

Marks Distribution Map for the Final Exam

Activities	Marks
1. Unseen Passages	10
2. Reading Comprehension	10

3. Grammar and Functions	30
4. Writing	20
5. Vocabulary	15
6. Literature Spot	10
7. Spelling	5
Total Mark	**100**

Marks Distribution Map for Monthly and Mid–yearly
<u>Written</u> Exams

Activities	Marks
1. Unseen Passage	10
2. Reading Comprehension	10
3. Grammar and Functions	20
4. Writing	15
5. Vocabulary	10
6. Literature Focus	10
7. Spelling	5
Total Mark	**80**

Marks Distribution Map for Monthly and Mid–yearly
<u>Oral</u> Exams

Activities	Marks
1. Listening	5
2. Speaking	5
3. Reading	10
Total Mark	**20**

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الملخص:

يهدف البحث إلى تكوين صورة واقعية واضحة لحالة تدريس اللغة الانكليزية لغة أجنبية في المدارس الثانوية في العراق بعد تبني الطريقة التواصلية من قبل وزارة التربية في العام الدراسي (2002-2003) وذلك بكشف المشاكل السلبية التي تواجه هذه الطريقة في التطبيق العملي ، لغرض إيجاد الحلول أو التفكير بحلول مناسبة لها أو تذليلها .

لقد دُرست اللغة الانكليزية في العراق بطريقة audio-lingual لتسع وثلاثين عاماً وخرجت اجيالاً من المدرسين ألفوا هذه الطريقة ومنهم ما يزال متأثراً بها أو بطرائق أخرى مثل طريقة Grammar-Translation في عمله وذلك لسهولة التدريس وفق مبادئهما وكذلك لغرض اعداد طلبتهم للامتحان الذي يعتبره الكثير منهم هو الهدف الأول ، باعتبار أن نسبة النجاح التي يحققوها هي الاداة التقليدية التي تفضي إلى كتاب شكر أو عقوبة .

لقد تم بحث ومناقشة دور كلاً من المدرس والطالب في هذه الطريقة وكيفية بناء المجاميع والمعايير التي بموجبها يوزع الطلبة على هذه المجاميع ومشكلة العدد الكبير للطلبة في الصف وكيفية التعامل مع هذه الظاهرة الغالبة في أكثر المدارس ، الاخطاء التي يحدثها الطلبة وكيفية التعامل معها ، كيفية التعامل مع الضوضاء وفقدان السيطرة على الصف والتي ربما تؤدي إلى الفوضى جراء عمل المجاميع ، وكذلك تم مناقشة توزيع الدرجات في الامتحانات المدرسية والوزارية المعدة من قبل وزارة التربية .

وقد بنى الباحث آراءه من خلال عمله الطويل في هذا الميدان ومن خلال الانشطة التدريبية مثل الدورات ، الدروس التدريبية ، الاجتماعات ، الندوات وزيارات تبادل الخبرة ، وكذلك على استبانة مفتوحة واخرى مغلقة لمدرسي اللغة الانكليزية .

وأخيرًا انتهت الدراسة بمجموعة من الاستنتاجات والتوصيات المناسبة .