

Methods to Improve the Students "English Language Speaking Skills" In Iraq ((Study on Kufa University))

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ABSTRACT: Investigating how English language instruction is viewed and approached in Iraqi universities is the aim of this study. It is a common misconception among most students that learning English is hard, tedious, and useless for speaking the language fluently. Moreover, most teachers deal with the English language like any other science in the teaching method, and this is clear as most university graduates do not speak the English language despite obtaining excellent grades, especially in the English language. Also, most of those interested resort to learning the English language online when they come across movies or other programs in English.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the communication tools and English language learning activities. It will be examined how teachers might make English learning in classrooms more effective by incorporating enjoyment into the study of English. Students are thus inspired and driven to speak English fluently. English language instructors or those who teach other subjects in the English at Kufa University colleges were given a sample description of this study.

Keywords: Communication, speaking skill, interaction, attitudes, tools.

1. Introduction

English is utilized as a second language in several countries as a result of the growth and dissemination of the language worldwide. The use of the English language increased. Today, English serves as the language of social context, politics, business, education, industries, media, communication, a crucial subject in curriculum, and the language of education (Shyamlee & Phil 2012). In English lessons, grammar is typically taught first by teachers. Passive learning takes place when the teacher is heavily involved in the scenario. Teachers give oral exercises, pronunciation, listening, and speaking skills less weight. But writing, grammar, and vocabulary are given a lot of weight. Exam and test passing are prioritized over improving pupils' capacity for productivity (Zohrabi, et.al, 2021, p,20).

Grammar exercises have been used as writing assignments; even university students lack the abilities to utilize English in a conversational manner. (Zohrabi, et.al, 2021). In order to improve the output of EFL learners in this system. This study aims to focus on the importance of speaking and communication skills for students in Iraq's universities, besides It clarifies the role of university instructors who wish to assist students in achieving their goals of communicating and speaking English fluently. Talking and interacting with students in the classroom yields beneficial outcomes because the teacher's words and sentences are largely retained by the students. The social interactions that students have with their teachers, peers, and other people probably influence how quickly they acquire new languages. (Kong, 2009). Also, using clarification means that help with correct pronunciation, correspondingly makes the lecture more enjoyable for the students

2. Purpose of the Study

The goal of the study is to determine how English language university teachers in Iraq are utilizing new tools and techniques, such as recorders, movies, and audios, to teach English. In order to enhance and advance the students' language proficiency, Teachers also make an effort to use English to govern the classroom and speak it more frequently than Arabic. The study aims to improve the students' English-speaking fluency

3. Research Questions

- 1- What are the best strategies that English teachers can use to assist students in learning and speaking English as a second language?
- 2- Why do the majority of English instructors utilize Arabic in the classroom?

- 3- How have researchers discovered that utilizing innovative techniques, resources, and English-speaking teachers all enhance language competency and support students' ability to speak the language fluently?

4. The Theoretical Side

4.1. Learning and Acquisition

The term "acquisition" describes the improvement of linguistic skills. Learning, on the other hand, refers to a more thorough process of learning language's structural components, such as its vocabulary and grammar (Yule, 2010). Who gave acquiring a first language and teaching a kid their native tongue satisfied their need to interact with those around them (Rehman & et.al, 2014). Young children who learn a second language via contact and frequent use of the language with native speakers engage in activities that are linked with acquisition. (Yule, 2010) Learning a foreign language presents challenges for foreign language learners as they have limited or no opportunities to engage with the language.

Students who lack knowledge and who do not make an effort to communicate in order to pick up L2 skills have negative attitudes about learning a language. The idea that these pupils have a positive or negative reactions about learning English towards the class. Even with extensive English instruction at all levels, students struggle with the language, especially in university settings. Further comprehensive research on attitudes toward English learners (Genc & Aydin, 2017). Also, among Iraqi college students is needed in order to improve the performance of English language learners.

4.2. Teaching Tools

Traditionally, the goal of language instruction in schools has been to increase students' linguistic vocabulary rather than their ability to communicate socially. (Yule, 2010). The English language has developed into the perfect medium of exchange. It has expedited and streamlined learning in educational settings more than in the past. It is clear that proficiency in English is essential in today's society. It is widely accepted that computers and mobile phones constitute significant breakthroughs in education and new information.

Through the use of modern educational methods, teachers have been able to achieve a variety of specialized goals, notably in the area of education and for those who are studying foreign languages. Nowadays, the value of development is clear and recognized in every sphere of our lives. It has never been so easy or entertaining to converse (Amiri & Branch, 2012). For instance, the use of English-language films to improve linguistic proficiency. These advantages include raising students' motivation levels, improving their speech and oral communication skills, and growing their cultural awareness, all of which contribute to the creation of more authentic language learning due to differences in their learning styles and school environments, some students had trouble picking up a new language, so some researchers used English videos as instructional aids.

Several teaching methods have been tested to see how effective they are when the number of English language learners' increases. (Albiladi & et.al, 2018). It is important to keep in mind that English education has flourished and gained recognition in the contemporary world because it stimulates students' interest in becoming involved and learning about topics they find interesting. When asserting that these tools have succeeded in displacing traditional education. There are a number of techniques that may be applied in various ways. Others are helpful for training in reading, writing, listening, and speaking English. A sense of realism is effectively created by some, making them helpful for testing and learning. This greatly increases students' interest in, enthusiasm for, and participation in class activities. (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012)

Multimedia supports teaching in a way that many other instruments cannot, but this does not mean that multimedia can replace any other kind of instrument. Therefore, teachers must choose the appropriate media and tools based on their subject matter and mix them with more conventional approaches for maximum effectiveness. Some teachers can have the false impression that they will completely integrate multimedia technologies into their instruction. It is thought that the more multimedia technology is used, the better the class environment may become. It is a component of teaching process when practical teaching is taking place.

The benefits of using media in language learning settings have been extensively studied, but the usefulness of watching movies for educational purposes has not received as much attention. In addition, there was not much consideration given to the opinions of seasoned language instructors regarding the use of videos featuring native speakers conversing to help students get better at the language. Movies have the power to improve education, help students and teachers communicate, and promote greater interaction and idea sharing between the groups. (Albiladi & et al, 2018).

Both speaking and literary comprehension skills can be enhanced for students by conversing with native English speakers or speakers who sound like native English speakers. This is especially true of university (Amiri, & Branch, 2012, P.104). Everything needs to be done in tandem with the English language teacher, with follow-up. Development should also be relevant to the requirements of the teachers and lead to behavioral changes. (Stroupe & Kimura, 2013).

4.3. Teaching methods

Successful professional development aims to provide educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to give their students more opportunities for learning. (Stroupe & Kimura, 2013) multiple methods in teaching English language. (Al-Nawrasy, 2013). Instructor motivation in the classroom is an internal force that propels students' acquisition of the English language through behavior, goal-setting, desire to succeed, and attitude. ((Kong, 2009). Motivation for study and work is necessary to boost students' self-esteem and encourage them to learn. (Genc & Aydin, 2017) consequently, these lessen students' anxiety when learning a foreign language by assisting them in viewing learning English as a fulfilling and joyful experience. (Getie1, 2020).

Students that are motivated are more likely to pick things up quickly than those who are not, especially when it comes to who pronounced challenging languages like Arabic. Iraqi students have the qualifications and abilities to acquire and learn the English language and pronunciation it skillfully (Al- Shamarti, 2022). Motivation for studying English with the goal of influencing English instruction and curriculum to improve students' performance and future opportunities (Nguyen, 2019).

There must be great interaction and communication between EFL students and native English speakers, in addition to among the students themselves in many scientific fields, including computers, aviation, travel, and diplomacy, English is the colloquial language. Finding efficient ways to learn English thus demands a lot of work. (Ayfah, 2020). As soon as someone moves into a new a community whose social interactions are conducted in the target language, it will be crucial element in helping the student achieve a certain degree of language proficiency; therefore, second language acquisition is to interact with a group whose members are fluent in the language in order to advance their language (Getie, 2020).

Instructors are the arbiters in the classroom, must help the students to be able to correctly define words in the target language as well as any possible native language counterparts. Some nations still teach Latin and Greek while incorporating the grammar translation approach to teach grammar and vocabulary, less emphasis is placed by the teachers on oral exercises, pronunciation, listening, and speaking skills. However, they give writing, grammar, and vocabulary a lot of attention. More emphasis is placed on passing exams and tests than on raising pupils' production. Writing assignments have included grammar exercises, even for pupils at the high school level like university students' proficiency in English communication is weak. That many students enroll in English language programs only with the intention of passing exams and receiving high marks – which are attained by providing accurate responses.

The Iranian language that academics use to compare and clarify English grammar and language structures is one of the major problems. That indicates that there is a barrier to English-language interaction, communication, and idea sharing between teachers and students. (Zohrabi & et.al, 2012, p.21). This is clearly the same issue that Iraqi English language instructors is dealing with. Students must master communicating using the skills they have acquired in the Lessons that should not Lack of enthusiasm (Bidin & et.al, 2009).

Teachers can incorporate English-language literature, culture, and way of life into their classes by using visual and auditory resources. Online collaborations and exchange programs have the potential to enhance language engagement in universities by hosting target communities (Genc & Aydin, 2017). It is expected that through university partnership, a better understanding of students' desire to study English can enhance the language learning environment and student accomplishment in the university education.

The listener's comprehension is necessary to the speaker's discourse in determining understandability. Consequently, the talker-listener interaction should be taken into account while teaching English language. Students often only speak a single language, and they seldom ever interact with English outside of the classroom for that. Determining ways to assist students in becoming more proficient in speaking is one of the important aspects of teaching ESL (Al-Nawrasy, 2013).

The main factor focuses on Iraq university students; in this study, that the fluency is measured an individual's capacity to articulate concepts clearly, succinctly, and without hesitation. In order to have a significant impact on their students' language proficiency, English teachers must interact with them in the

language and use modern technology. The learning situations include the general learning environment, the interactions between students and teachers, and the perspectives of the students.

on the instructor's part to guarantee their understanding. (Getie, 2020) teachers face challenges in developing their careers. For example, they might not have prior experience in speaking English or other second languages (Stroupe & Kimura, 2013). This is the situation facing language instructors in Iraq generally and in universities specifically. Especially any language learning that requires exercises and communication.

5. Statistical Analysis

The study involved professors and English language instructors at Kufa University, as well as those from other disciplines, particularly art and education colleges. The sample was chosen due to the availability of professionals with English expertise who are receptive to student questions. The Program (SPSS) was certified for results.

5.1. Sample description

The population of this study was to the English language teachers or those who teach other disciplines in the English language at Kufa University colleges. 70 questionnaires were distributed and 61 questionnaires were retrieved. The accepted number of complete answers was 50 questionnaires that were used to conduct the statistical analysis; thus, the retrieval rate was 71.43%. The attitudinal scale used for this research contained a statement that required teachers to answer on a Likert scale. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items concerning language attitudes in terms of Teaching tools (10 items), Teaching methods (10 items), and Student interaction in the English language lesson (10 items). All the items were put on a 5-point Likert scale (never, rarely, sometimes, mostly and always). The responses to the questionnaire items were converted into the following grade:

Answer	grade
never	1
rarely	2
sometimes	3
mostly	4
always	5

The following judgment criteria were applied, never, the mean range (less than 1.80), rarely (1.80 – 2.59), sometime (2.60 – 3.39), mostly (3.40 – 4.19) always (4.20 – 5.0)

Criteria	Mean range
never	Less than 1.80
rarely	1.80 – 2.59
sometimes	2.60 – 3.39
mostly	3.40 – 4.19
always	4.20 – 5.0

All the questions were collected for data coding and analysis. Statistical Package for the Social Science Program (SPSS) version 28.0 was used to analyze the collected data.

Descriptive characteristics were measured, represented by means, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values, to determine the characteristics of the study items. The following methods were also used, Pearson correlation coefficient: to know the nature of the relationship between each of the study variables. Spearman-Brown coefficient and Cronbach's alpha coefficient to calculate the stability of study tools.

5.2. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire

To measure the validity of the questionnaire items, the Pearson correlation coefficient, as an internal consistency method, was calculated to know the extent to which the questionnaire statements (items) are related to the total score of the questionnaire. As can be seen from the table (1), which indicates that most items correlate with the total score of the questionnaire at a level of statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.01$), which confirms the consistency of all statements with the total score and that the items have high structural validity.

Table 1: shows the validity as Pearson correlation coefficient of all the items in the questionnaire (n=50)

Variable	item	r	P value
Teaching tools	1	0.351**	0.001
	2	0.316**	0.002
	3	0.320**	0.001
	4	0.553**	0.000
	5	0.384**	0.000
	6	0.405**	0.000
	7	0.424**	0.000
	8	0.366**	0.000
	9	0.416**	0.000
	10	0.357**	0.000
Teaching methods	1	0.413**	0.000
	2	0.432**	0.000
	3	0.479**	0.000
	4	0.349**	0.002
	5	0.346**	0.000
	6	0.395**	0.000
	7	0.399**	0.000
	8	0.432**	0.000
	9	0.387**	0.000
	10	0.397**	0.000
Student interaction in the English language lesson	1	0.421**	0.000
	2	0.421**	0.000
	3	0.440**	0.000
	4	0.478**	0.000
	5	0.521**	0.000
	6	0.400**	0.000
	7	0.330**	0.001
	8	0.304**	0.002
	9	0.327**	0.001
	10	0.314**	0.002

Two methods were facilitated to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire items, Split- the Half Method and the Cronbach Alpha method.

Table 2: Split-Half and Cronbach Alpha statistical output of questionnaire variables.

Variables	No. of Items	Superman-Brown Coefficient	Guttman Coefficient	Cronbach's alpha Coefficient
Teaching tools	10	0.784	0.762	0.778
Teaching methods	10	0.717	0.727	0.781
Student interaction	10	0.763	0.759	0.773
Total	30	0.792	0.791	0.801

It is clear from Table (2) that the reliability coefficient using the split-half and Cronbach Alpha methods for the questionnaire variables was higher than the acceptable score (0.70), which is a high reliability value and acceptable to the researcher (Wiley, 2020). This means all the questionnaire items can measure the research goals effectively.

Wiley. (2020). *Advances in Questionnaire Design, Development, Evaluation and Testing* (P. C. Beatty, D. Collins, L. Kaye, J.-L. Padilla, G. B. Willis, & A. Wilmot (eds.)). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

5.3. Personal features of respondents

Table 3: Personal features of respondents

Feature	Frequency	%
Sex		
Males	17	34
Females	33	66
Experience (years)		
<10	42	84
10-20	5	10
21-30	3	6
>31	0	0
Academic achievement		
Diploma	4	8
M.Sc.	38	76
Ph.D.	8	16

It is clear how important the demographic distribution of the research sample, as shown in Table (3), is. It offers thorough comprehension of gender, experience years, academic achievement.

The number of males reached (17 answer) at rate of 34% while the number of females reached (33 answers) at rate of 66%. The answers varied according to experience years, as less than (10 years) 42 answers at rate of 84% while, (10 – 20 years) 5 answers at approximately of 10%, and (21 -30 years) have 3 answers rate of 6%. There is a discrepancy in academic achievement, as the results of the field study recorded that the Diploma (4 answers) rate of 8%, M.Sc. (38 answers) i.e. 76%, and Ph.D. (8 answers) i.e. 16%

5.4. Descriptive statistical outputs for the study variables

The arithmetic means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum mean of items were calculated for the study variables, teaching tools, Teaching Methods, and Student interaction. (Table 4)

Variables	Items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	±SD
Teaching Tools	10	3.74	4.40	4.05	0.164
Teaching Methods	10	3.02	4.24	3.76	0.502
Student interaction	10	2.60	4.24	3.56	0.32
Overall	30			3.79	0.244

Table 4: shows that the overall mean score of participants was 3.79 (SD = 0.244). This result reveals that the teachers have average positive attitudes and methods in learning the English language of students. Among the three variables of language attitudes, the Teaching Tools represent the highest mean score (4.05±0.164), whereas the lowest mean was recorded by student interaction (3.56±0.244).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Teaching Tools

Items	Mean	±SD	Evaluation Level
1	4.40	0.670	always
2	4.34	0.658	always
3	3.74	0.751	mostly
4	4.12	0.982	mostly
5	3.82	0.919	mostly
6	4.06	0.740	mostly
7	4.04	0.856	mostly
8	4.10	0.863	mostly
9	3.94	0.978	mostly
10	3.98	0.869	mostly
Total	4.05	0.164	mostly

The mean of most items fell within the (mostly) level in the judgment criterion, except items 1 and 2 which had a higher level (always), these facts indicate that teachers effectively used teaching tools and gave close and positive results in response to the questions of this variable. Provided accurate and encouraging answers to the questions pertaining to this variable. It is expected that this will have a positive effect on students' English language proficiency. The table (5) shows how the majority of Kufa University's English language teachers use a variety of gadgets to teach English, including visual aids, conversation recording,

learning films, voice assistance in the labs, and speaking with native English speakers. All these were their responses to the questions asked in this variable.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Teaching Methods

Items	Mean	±SD	Evaluation Level
1	4.24	0.716	always
2	4.12	1.003	mostly
3	4.16	0.738	mostly
4	4.08	0.966	mostly
5	4.18	0.941	mostly
6	3.44	1.091	mostly
7	3.68	0.471	mostly
8	3.26	1.209	sometimes
9	3.46	0.952	mostly
10	3.02	1.116	sometimes
Total	3.77	0.502	mostly

The mean of most items fell within the (mostly) level in the judgment criterion, except item 1 which had a higher level (always), and items 8 and 10 which had a neutral level (sometimes), these facts indicate that, the majority of instructors and professors reply closely. Table (6) demonstrates that, with a mean score of 4.24, the majority of respondents to item (1) support the use of visual aids and videos in teaching English lessons.

The table presents the means between (4.12-3.44). For items 2, 3, 5, and, 6, the inquiries concerned the teachers' emphasis on motivation, effective communication, and oral skills that indicates they employ strategies that are both positive and successful. The responses to Items 7 and 9 had a (mostly) the mean (3.68, 3.46), when asked if they taught the class in Arabic and, if they explained any concepts in their own language, most teachers responded in the affirmative. This underscores a disadvantage of teaching English to non-native speakers of the language. In item 8, teachers inquired about whether teaching English in one's mother tongue was simpler than teaching it in the target language, additionally Item 10 asked if the primary goal of English language instruction is to pass the exam, these two items show a poor result for students' success in speaking English, with means of (3.26) and (3.02), respectively.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Student Interaction

Items	Mean	±SD	Evaluation Level
1	3.32	0.96	sometimes
2	3.38	0.73	sometimes
3	2.60	1.26	sometimes
4	4.00	0.86	mostly
5	3.86	1.05	mostly
6	2.80	1.34	sometimes
7	4.24	0.66	Always
8	3.80	0.61	mostly
9	4.10	0.30	mostly
10	3.54	0.84	mostly
Total	3.56	0.32	mostly

The mean of items in this variable fell within three levels of evaluation, one statement (7) had a (always) level and was accepted by all respondents, 5 items had a (mostly) level in the judgment criterion, which means that the majority of respondents agree with the concept of the phrase, while 4 items had a (sometimes) level which revealed that there is a great difference in response to the concept of these paragraphs.

Table 7: 's questions center on student interaction, which is a product of how well the teaching techniques and methods are applied. Through a variety of questions aimed at the professors and teachers themselves, these items demonstrate how students interact towards English lessons. The first three items ask whether the students enjoyed their English classes and whether they felt comfortable speaking and using the language fluently in class, it indicates that the results are not encouraging for students to be able to speak English fluently when these questions have an evaluation level (sometimes). In contrast to items 1, 2, and 3, the teachers asked about items 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10, as to whether the students were shy or found it

difficult to speak English fluently, or if they had gone years without speaking the language, The level (mostly) of these items' indicate that students lack proficiency in English speaking.

Statement (7), had a high level (always) and mean (4.24) with the question if the students prefer written test to oral ones in English, this considers a pessimistic attitude that keeps students from reaching the desired result, which is proficient English speaking. This suggests that students do not get many chances to speak English in class, so teachers should give them more support and inspiration.

6. Discussion

The results of this study were obtained using the questionnaire, which was addressed to several academics and instructors at the University of Kufa. to determine what obstacles and problems Iraqi students have in speaking English fluently, although they are proficient in writing, reading, and English grammar. According to the researcher, most Iraqi students – even those who have performed exceptionally well in English – lack speaking fluency.

The study comprised three variables, with ten items in each variable, all The majority of those who responded were female and, who held master's degrees; additionally, those with less than ten years of experience. as shown in Table 3. The questionnaire questions and answers in relation to the variables were discussed by the researcher. The aim of the study is to show a relationship between these variables. Table (5) indicates that a significant proportion of teachers are implementing contemporary tools that support improving their students' English language proficiency.

The teachers gave encouraging and positive answers about the second variable, in table (6), which is teaching methods, expect the items 7, 8, and 9, Participants were asked the following: the mother tongue is used to explain new idea, depending on mother tongues easier than the target language and controlling the class in Arabic language. Consecutively, the response mean scores were: 3.68, 3.26 and 3.46, with evaluation (mostly, sometimes and mostly) according to the participants' answers, the mother tongue – Arabic – is the most frequently utilized to explain and debate subjects in the classes of English. The participants were actually open to using non-traditional approaches, as evidenced by their responses; however, they still use Arabic, their mother tongue, to teach English language classes, though. Also, they believe that it is simpler to converse in than the target language. The study's goal is to identify the issues that cause pupils to struggle when speaking English. Depending on how the teacher runs the class, there might not be enough discussion or interaction between the teachers and students, which the researcher believes is one of the main obstacles to this.

Table 7 shows the third variable, which is the students' interaction with the English language lessons. From the perspective of the researcher, it is related to the first and second variables. The researcher talked about the questions pertaining to items 1, 2, and 3, which were the students' enjoyment and likeability of English language instruction and their proficiency in the language. It seems that the teachers and professors' responses (sometimes) with mean scores 3.32, 3.38 and 2.60 was a contradictory result with their responses in the first and second variables, which means, that modern tools and techniques were applied but perhaps in a very limited manner, or with little interest.

Items 4 and 5 were crucial to the research, to which the majority of teachers responded (mostly), with mean scores 4.00 and 4.86 demonstrating that most students study English only to pass exams and that they are feeling shy while speaking the language. Regarding items 8, 9, and 10, the questions asked were: Do students face challenges when speaking English? The answers given were: (mostly) with mean scores 3.80, 4.10 and 3.54. Most teachers also agreed with item 7, as they answered (always) and mean 4.24, it was a significant question: Do students prefer the written exam to the oral exam? This outcome made sense given what was stated in the second variable of the teachers' responses for items 7, 8, and 9. This is where the relationship between the variables becomes clear, as does the way the first and second variables influence the third variable, which is the students' interactions towards the English language classes.

7. Conclusion

The research's conclusions demonstrate the strong correlation between the variables, enabling the investigator to validate the influence of the first variable – teaching tools – and the second – teaching methods – on the third variable – students interaction. Many teachers are found to support modern tool application, but they lack the proficiency to handle it with confidence. Modern teaching techniques ought to be supplementary as well. This is because different explanation methods and teaching approaches can change students' perceptions of the English language classes. To become proficient in any language, including English, speaking it requires practice and communication. This study found that the majority of

responses suggested that most students study English only to pass exams and that they have unfavorable opinions about their ability to speak English fluently and confidently. Teachers also gave written exams and questions precedence over spoken and oral questions. This is undoubtedly a response to the majority of teachers' responses, which indicated that they managed English language classes and spoke to students primarily in Arabic, which is their mother tongue. Regular conversations between teachers and students are crucial for assisting students in developing fluency in the English language. Encouraging students to communicate with one another is also crucial.

8. Recommendation

The researcher suggests conducting further studies that concentrate on students' opinions about education and its contemporary approaches in other universities and educational settings. Universities and other educational establishments must also supply the greatest equipment, such as video machines, projectors, language labs, and recorders. It is important to offer assistance to English language teachers, enhance their speaking skills through conversational advanced language courses, and delegate them to countries where English is their first language. This greatly helps in improving teachers' proficiency in speaking English and thus increases their ability to interact and communicate with students in that language in the classroom.

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