The Relationship between the Actual Implementation of the "English for Iraq" Curriculum and Teachers' Intentions, and Perceptions in Iraqi EFL Preparatory Schools

Zainab A. Albayati[1], Dr. Muna M. Abbas Al-Khateeb[2]

[1]College of Basic Education, University of Babylon, Iraq.
[2]College of Engineering, University of Babylon, Iraq.
Email: za.albayati3991@gmail.com

Abstracts

This study investigates the intentions, perceptions, and actual implementation of an innovative English curriculum among preparatory school EFL teachers in Iraq. The research recognizes the growing importance of English globally and Iraq's efforts to enhance English language education and implement an appropriate innovative curriculum. However, the implementation of a new curriculum poses significant challenges related to teachers' knowledge, intention, and academic culture. The study focuses on understanding the relationship between curriculum intentions, teachers' perceptions, and the actual implementation of the curriculum. The study also explores how teachers' intention, culture, and other factors influence the implementation of the curriculum. Data were collected through a combination of vignettes, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews with a random sample of 10 male teachers from 10 preparatory schools in Babylon Governorate during the 2023-2024 school years. The results indicated that teachers are enthusiastic about the new curriculum, but its effective implementation faces many challenges. Teachers recognize the potential of the curriculum, but suffer from insufficient materials and overcrowded classrooms that hinder optimal teaching and learning. The study emphasizes that in order to successfully implement the curriculum, through continuous professional development and strong support systems, there must be ongoing professional development and strong support systems, ongoing training programs can help teachers adapt to the new curriculum, and the provision of resources, teaching aids, and manageable class size can create a more conducive learning environment, leading to better learning outcomes.

Introduction

With the increasing importance of the English language, many countries, including Iraq, have been forced to revise their English language teaching strategies and integrate English language education into their educational systems. This integration helps students to develop their language skills which are important for accessing global knowledge, sharing and promoting intercultural understanding (Gradul, 2006)

However, implementing a new English curriculum poses some difficulties. Waazi and Abbaspour (2014) explored the challenges faced by teachers, which include their knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, and academic culture. Teaching requires teachers to be practical and find ways to apply theory to practical situations. Teachers interact with colleagues within a learning community and do not acquire knowledge in isolation (Lucas, 2011). Teachers have acquired the skills and knowledge needed to teach within the specific educational environments in which they work. The social factors surrounding them influence their teaching styles and methods, thereby socially constructing their teaching practices (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010).

English language teachers' activities are greatly impacted by cultural influences (Lucas, 2011). This has an impact on how they view themselves as educators and how society views them and their students .Teaching and learning views, such as how they view their own role in the classroom and that of their students, can have an impact on an educator's behaviors. Tudor (2001) highlights how important sociocultural elements are to instruction in particular learning environments. He contends that the attitudes, intentions , and perceptions of educators as well as students are directly impacted by the cultural norms of the context in which they operate (Vygotsky, 1978; Holliday, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2001).Their duties in the classroom are informed by this understanding, which highlights how crucial it is to take sociocultural elements into account when designing instructional strategies (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Lantolf, 2000; Marsh, 1991). The proper application of curricula and instructional techniques depends on an understanding of these elements.

In implementing the comprehensive curriculum reform, the Iraqi Ministry of Education seems to have ignored the cultural and contextual challenges faced by English language teachers. Assuming that teachers are qualified to investigate the aims of the reform, the government has downplayed the difficulties they face (Alwan, 2004). This has impacted English language education, with teachers suffering from a lack of professional development, resources, and instructional support (Kirk and Winthrop, 2007).

This study examines the connection between the goals of the current English curriculum, teachers' intentions , perspectives , and the actual execution of the curriculum in Iraqi schools. The main objectives of this study are To investigate the relationship between the teachers' intentions and perceptions, and the actual implementation of the curriculum; To explore the influences of teachers' intentions and culture and other contributory factors in the implementation of the present English language curriculum; To gain a greater insight of the underlying reasons behind the teachers' pedagogical challenges. The problem of the current research is best expressed by answering the following questions:

1. How do Iraqi preparatory English teachers perceive the new curriculum?

a.   What views do they hold about the reform?

b.   What kind of intention do they hold about teaching and learning? How do these intentions relate to the agenda of reform?

c.   Where do these intention stem from? How are these intentions reflected in their classrooms?

d.   How do teachers find the supporting documents (e.g., the teachers' book)?

2. What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the dissemination of the innovation?

a.   What is the model employed to disseminate the curriculum to the teachers?

b.   What is the training provision like? What are teachers' views of the effectiveness of the training provision?

c.   How do these perceptions affect teachers' pedagogical practices?

3. How do teachers implement the required CLT policies? What are the implications for current and future practices?

a.   What facilitators and constraints do teachers encounter in establishing a CLT environment?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum

Kelly (2009) points out that the term "curriculum" has been construed in a number of ways; therefore, it is vital to define it. Understanding the many definitions of "curriculum" held by different individuals may aid curriculum designers in determining the contents of a curriculum. Anything can be difficult to adequately understand without a clear definition. Since there's no consensus on a precise description, it's likely that people have vague ideas about what a curriculum is. Since they represent a set of decisions and firmly establish particular values and objectives, curriculum policies ought to be contentious at all times. Therefore, there will inevitably be debate over any new official curricular guideline (Brennan, 2011, p. 260). Curricula, according to the researcher, offer an instructional portrayal of these ideas.

Curriculum ideologies

Curriculum ideologies are the philosophical underpinnings that shape educational practices and policies. Understanding these ideologies is crucial for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to design and implement effective curricula. Here, we discuss four primary curriculum ideologies: scholar-academic, social efficiency, learner-centered, and social reconstruction. (Bruner, 1960)

•   Scholarly academic ideology emphasizes the transmission of established knowledge and academic disciplines, as advocated by figures like E.D. Hirsch and Jerome Bruner (Hirsch, 1987; Bruner, 1960).

• Social efficiency ideology focuses on preparing students for specific roles in society, with key proponents including Franklin Bobbitt and Ralph Tyler (Bobbitt, 1918; Tyler, 1949).

• Learner-centered ideology prioritizes the needs and interests of the learner, as promoted by John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Carl Rogers (Dewey, 1938).

• Lastly, social reconstruction ideology views education as a means to address social injustices and transform society, supported by thinkers such as George Counts and Paulo Freire (Counts, 1932; Freire, 1970).

Understanding these ideologies helps in developing balanced curricula that address various educational goals and societal needs.

Table1 : Four major Curriculum Ideologies

Curriculum ideologies	Objective of the subject	Educational process	The student's role	The teacher's role
Scholar academic ideology	Acquiring content knowledge previous conceptions of the disciplines.	Transmissive/ knowledge direct transmission	Receptive/no participation role.	Transmitter
Social efficiency ideology	Behaviourist to achieve societal needs	Transmissive/ knowledge direct transmission	Active participation	Supervisor
Student-centred ideology	Personal liberation and development	descriptive format to encourage independent learning	Dependent learner/Active participation	Facilitator
Social reconstruction ideology	Behaviourist to tackle societal illness	Transmissive/ knowledge direct transmission	Active participation	Colleague

The Role of Teachers in Curriculum Reform and Implementation

Teachers are key players in curriculum reform because they are both change agents and implementers of educational reform. Effective training and professional development are crucial for the successful implementation of the new curriculum, as their comprehension and interpretation are critical (Fullan, 2007). In order to modify curricula to accommodate a range of student demands, teachers offer insightful input on the viability and effects of changes (Elmore, 2004). Realistic and pertinent modifications are ensured when instructors are involved in curriculum development (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Teachers have the power to influence legislators, administrators, and other educators by advocating for change (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Additionally, by encouraging ongoing learning and the development of new skills, this method advances their professional development (Lieberman & Miller, 2001). Successful reform depends on teachers being able to customize the curriculum to each student's requirements through direct engagement with the students (Fullan, 2007).

Teachers' Intentions

The term "teacher intentions" refers to a teacher's commitment or plans to use a certain teaching methodology or curriculum, like English for Iraq. According to Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all have an impact on intention, which is a powerful predictor of actual conduct (Ajzen, 1991). The effectiveness of the curriculum, the support they receive from administrators and colleagues, and their confidence in their ability to successfully implement the new curriculum are some of the factors that impact Iraqi EFL teachers' intentions to implement the Iraqi English curriculum (Al-Mahrouqi & Denman, 2018). These goals are important because they have a direct impact on the level of effort and creative strategies that teachers are likely to employ in their lessons, which affects the curriculum's overall success (Bashgood et al., 2011).

Teachers' Intentions about Curriculum Reform

Teachers' intentions on curriculum change may influence its implementation, just as their intentions do. Zhang & Liu (2014), and Berg et al. (2015) have highlighted this. Instructors' intentions play a crucial role in the implementation of the curriculum. Before instructors can effectively teach the intended elements of the curriculum, they must first align their own intentions with the curriculum's objectives (Richards and Lockhart, 1996). Teachers' perspectives on curriculum change are considered significant and have a pivotal influence on whether educational innovations are implemented or rejected (Berg et al., 2015).

Teachers' Perceptions

Teachers' perceptions, which are influenced by their own experiences, their educational backgrounds, and the larger sociocultural context, are the ideas, attitudes, and interpretations they have regarding their teaching methods, students, and learning resources. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), these impressions affect instructors' motivations and behavior in the classroom. More successful teaching methods could result from favorable perceptions.

The way that EFL is perceived by Iraqi secondary school teachers is crucial when it comes to the new curriculum. Teachers are more likely to use the curriculum more successfully if they believe it will help students acquire the English language and is in line with academic objectives (Al-Mahrouqi & Denman, 2018). On the other hand, their effort and involvement may decrease if they believe the curriculum is too challenging or unimportant. Recognizing these perceptions is critical for curriculum designers and teachers to design professional development programs and support systems that address teachers' concerns and enhance their readiness to adopt the curriculum (Richardson, 1996).

Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Reform

In the field of education, teachers' perspectives are extremely important (Simmons and MacLean, 2016), particularly when it comes to educational changes (Berg et al., 2015). Teachers' opinions regarding the educational program have reportedly impeded successful implementation, according to a number of research papers from various contexts (Imants et al., 2013).

Classroom Practices

Classroom practices are the specific methods and strategies used by teachers to facilitate learning and manage the classroom environment. These practices include instructional techniques, assessment methods, classroom management strategies, and the use of instructional resources. Effective classroom practices are guided by educational theories, teacher training, and practical experience and play a critical role in student engagement and achievement (Marzano, 2003). Teachers adapt their practices based on students' needs and curriculum requirements and strive to create an effective learning environment. In innovative curriculum, the classroom practices of middle school English teachers are critical to the successful implementation of the curriculum. These practices may include interactive activities, collaborative learning, and the integration of multimedia resources to promote language acquisition (Al-Mahrouqi & Denman, 2018). Teachers' ability to use these strategies effectively depends on their professional development and understanding of the curriculum objectives. Adapting classroom practices is essential to meet challenges and ensure that students benefit as much as possible from the curriculum (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Omer (2019)

From Curriculum Reform to Classroom Practice: Intentions, Perceptions, and Actual Implementation in English Secondary Schools in Libya

The study seeks to bridge the gap between policy and practice in curriculum implementation by emphasizing the issues that teachers experience and bringing them to the attention of Libyan policymakers and curriculum designers. It takes a qualitative approach and uses triangulation techniques such as interviews, observations, and diaries to collect reliable data. The sample consists of 10 Libyan English language teachers, with an emphasis on their attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to the existing curriculum. Semi-structured interviews and formal classroom observations were among the tools utilized. Despite favorable teacher perceptions, the findings show that poor teacher education and professional development impede curriculum implementation, emphasizing the importance of greater training and ongoing professional development.

Sunar, R. (2018)

" Use of Communicative Language Teaching in the EFL classroom: Teachers' Perceptions and Practices "

The aim of the study was to explore teachers' perceptions and classroom practices regarding the use of communicative language teaching in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL). The study was conducted through descriptive research methods. Six English language teachers were selected for interviews and classroom observations in five classrooms in Calicut district. The finding revealed that although teachers held clear and positive perceptions of interactive English language teaching at the secondary level, its application to enhance language proficiency

at the secondary level was minimal. Contributing factors included large class sizes, overcrowded classrooms, prevalence of GT, inadequate teaching aids and infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and low levels of language proficiency among learners.

Abdullah (2019)

" Investigating English language Teachers' Practices, Identities and Agency in Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps in Iraq."

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of the new teaching context on English language teachers in relation to their implementation of the innovative curriculum, identities, and agency achievement. The sample consists of five teachers from school (IDP) camps with descriptive methods. Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with camp school English language teachers were conducted to collect the research data. The findings of the study highlight significant challenges in the implementation of the new English language curriculum in IDP camp schools, primarily due to entrenched traditional teaching practices and various contextual barriers.

METHODOLODY

According to the nature of the current study, which aims to investigate the relationship between the teachers' intentions ,perceptions, and the actual implementation of the curriculum, the researcher adopted a descriptive research. Descriptive research is one of the educational, non-experimental research designs that utilize quantitative data. Questions like what, how, when, and where can be answered through descriptive research. Descriptive research involves formulating variables , studying the relationship between non-manipulated variables, and producing generalizations. It is the main feature of descriptive research, where variables that have already been considered are chosen for observation (Best & Khan, 2006).

For this study, the researcher adopted the method of triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). The data collection methods employed in this research comprised multiple sources of inquiry, namely vignettes, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews. An interpretative research methodology was used to examine this work. Logical, conceptual, and subjective are other terms for an interpretative design (Robson, and McCartan, 2016). For this reason, in this study, "interpretive" and "qualitative" will be used equally.

The current study's data was acquired from 10 Iraqi teachers who are mainly accountable for evaluating EFL teachers. The researchers met with male teachers all of which a bachelor academic qualification, including bachelor's degrees. Their years of experience range from 10-20, and they specialize as EFL teachers.

INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

The data collection tools used in the study included vignettes, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews. These tools were selected to achieve triangulation, which involves using multiple sources of data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

Vignettes

Vignettes are brief hypothetical tales that depict actual events. Vignettes are offered to informed people, who are asked to comment. (Tremblay et al., 2022). Vignettes aren't brief narratives about made-up characters in predetermined situations to which a participant is asked to react, usually in the context of a one-on-one conversation. Vignettes are innovative methods to motivate participants to characterize the scenario according to their personal definitions in qualitative research. The vignette approach necessitates convincing settings; therefore, creating them takes careful consideration (Tremblay et al., 2022).

In this study, the vignettes consisting of three scenarios (paragraphs of several sentences) were designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' views on English language teaching in schools. To encourage responses to issues related to teacher-learner interaction and their perspectives on teaching and learning styles, the vignettes were shown in classrooms in their schools as availability and appropriateness dictated. The aim of showing the short scenarios before the other stages of data collection was to encourage students or teachers to think about their own practices and give them an incentive to think about their own practices to make them feel comfortable and responsive to certain scenarios in the textbook and make them feel less anxious. The researcher also aimed to make the vignettes realistic and relevant to the participants' personal experiences while avoiding sad scenarios in order to use the vignettes effectively, as suggested by different researchers (Bryman, 2016).

The purpose of the vignettes was to gather information about whether the participants had positive views about progressive and transitional teaching philosophies. This information is important because the current English curriculum is progressive, and the information to be obtained was related to the participants' intentions about progressive education. The researcher should make a connection between the participants' beliefs and their application of the current English curriculum.

The final vignette in this study was designed to give insight into participants' perspectives on the overall purpose of education. The researcher attempted to identify teachers' underlying attitudes by investigating whether they see education as a tool to help students interact with other cultures to better prepare them for adulthood or as a mechanism to enable them to achieve career and professional achievements in the future. This knowledge is particularly important because, although current English language curricula do not clearly state what they aim to achieve, the main purpose of English language teaching is often to prepare students for careers that require proficiency in a foreign language.

To give readers an idea of the views of the participants in this research on the ultimate purpose of education, a final picture was drawn in this research. The researcher sought to ascertain the primary perspectives of teachers by examining whether they view education as a means to support future employment and career satisfaction or as a means to help students engage in diverse cultures to enhance readiness for adulthood.

This study shows that current ELT curricula do not explicitly define their goals, although they often aim to prepare students for jobs that require foreign language proficiency. Therefore, English language teachers' understanding of teaching goals is important. This understanding

allows us to better understand their ideas and teaching practices and helps us study their behavior and attitudes towards English language teaching. This study aims to shed light on the motivations and cognitive processes that influence the way language teachers negotiate and influence the promotion of students' language proficiency. This helps prepare students for future tasks that may require English language proficiency.

An interview

According to Brinkman (2014, p. 1008), an interview is "a dialogic activity in which understanding occurs through a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee (or a group of interviewees)".

In this study, the researcher used two types of interviews, the semi-structured interview and the follow-up interview

Semi-structured interview

There are several types of interviews, one of which is a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is a guided, structured conversation in which the interviewer follows a set of pre-prepared open-ended questions but is free to explore topics in greater depth as they arise. This approach allows the interviewer to explore more detailed answers and adapt the conversation based on participants' responses (Dearnley, 2005; Kallio et al., 2016). By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher can gather comprehensive and accurate data that provides a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives and practices.

Interview questions can be used to learn about the past or present, or they can be used to speculate about the future. If the interviewees are willing, the best way to obtain information is to record the interview using a voice recorder or smartphone. If not, the researcher (interviewer) should take notes and, if necessary, add to them immediately after the interview while the information is still fresh in his or her mind (Best & Khan, 2006, p. 267).

Open-ended questions are used in qualitative interviews so that qualitative results can be given without numbers. They are often called "in-depth interviews" because they are used to learn more about the participant's interests, experiences, perceptions, ideas, attitudes, and feelings about the subject. Qualitative interviews also give the researcher a glimpse into the interviewee's life and help the researcher know what happened (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, p. 506).

In the current study, the researcher interviewed 10 respondents. The respondents are preparatory school EFL teachers in the center and north of Babylon province. The aim of this study is to find out whether teachers understand these variables (teachers' intentions, perceptions, and actual implementation of the new curriculum) as well as to investigate teachers' perspectives on the English language curriculum. This method was chosen for its ability to provide guidance while allowing participants to express their views freely and in detail, and for how they employ these variables in the classroom with students.

At the request of the interviewees, their real names and workplaces were kept confidential. Instead, the researcher used numbers such as "Teacher 1," "Teacher 2," and so on to refer to them. The researcher randomly selected 10 preparatory schools in the center and north of

Babylon Governorate and interviewed 10 EFL teachers in these schools in a face-to-face interview. The researcher divided the interview into twelve questions.

Follow-up interview

Through the examination of data obtained from observations made in classrooms. The investigator examines the observational data gathered, concentrating on matters pertaining to the implementation of curricula, particularly communicative language teaching (CLT) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL), as well as other associated matters.

Finding patterns, trends, and difficulties seen during class sessions will probably be part of this investigation. When an analysis is complete, the researcher uses the knowledge gleaned from the observational data to help craft questions for follow-up interviews. The researcher hopes to learn more about the concerns raised, get clarification, and get more in-depth viewpoints from the instructors by matching the interview questions with observations made in the classroom.

Drawing from a study of observational data, the researcher formulates a series of follow-up interview questions. The purpose of these questions is to delve further into instructors' practices, obstacles, and methods for putting CLT, CLIL, and other pertinent curricular elements into practice. They also aim to address particular concerns that were noted during classroom observations. These follow-up interviews serve the primary goal of providing a better knowledge of the viewpoints and ideas that instructors hold about teaching, as well as how these beliefs affect the actual practices that they carry out in the classroom.

The researcher sought to learn more and supplement the data gathered during the first phase of data collection, which comprised vignettes and initial interviews, by interviewing participants following each observed session. Contingent on participant availability and the particular activities conducted during the observed session , follow-up interviews were conducted for a maximum of twenty to thirty minutes. By delving further into teachers' ideas and reflections on their teaching practices through these interviews, the researcher may enhance our understanding of teachers' pedagogical intentions and teaching techniques as a whole.

Classroom observations

According to Bryman (2016), observation is "a method for consistently watching the actions of an individual as a result of an order of types." Qualitative research frequently makes use of observation in classrooms.Classroom observation is a method of doing research on what happens in classrooms by methodically observing and recording classroom occurrences. Classroom observation is crucial for evaluating and developing instructors (Zhu Ya-nan, 2023).

After conducting the initial set of interviews with participants, the researcher proceeds to conduct classroom observations over the course of one week. Over the course of this period, the researcher observes participants in their classroom environments on regular school days and during typical class hours, where the observation continues for a period of time. in the study The researcher works to create an organized table of 10 items and checklists because this table serves as a guide during the researcher's sessions, which helps document participants' behaviors in the classroom. For example, the researcher observes how participants conduct activities such as collaborative work. Through this timeline, the researcher can record and

classify similar behaviors based on the specific aspects being investigated, allowing for a systematic and structured approach to data collection.

Through these convenient observations, the researcher obtains a detailed description of the teachers' practices during their lessons. The data collected provided insights into how these practices align with the principles and objectives set out in the curriculum. By closely examining classroom procedures and interactions, you can assess the extent to which observed teaching practices reflect intended curriculum guidelines. This method allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the application of the curriculum in practice, highlighting how teachers translate educational principles into the reality of the classroom. The researcher obtains more comprehensive and accurate information during the data collection process in this qualitative study by taking field notes along with an observation table and checklist. " This rich data includes detailed descriptions of the setting, the teacher's procedures and methods, as well as the researcher's direct reactions to the observations. These observations informed the researcher's follow-up questions for the subsequent interviews with teachers. By addressing these points in the interviews, the researcher aimed to generate further discussion and gain insights into the reasons behind these teaching practices. The discrepancies between the initial interviews and the observed classroom practices highlight the importance of direct observation in research to capture the reality of teaching practices.

FACE VALIDITY

Face Validity Face validity is found when a researcher or research analyst who is an expert on the research topic looks at the research tool to see if it measures the research traits or not. Face validity means that an expert has to look at the items in the questionnaire and decide that the tool is a good way to measure the definition that is being looked at (Bolarinwa, 2015, p. 196). In this study, the face validity of these tools, i.e., teachers' intentions, perceptions, and actual implementation of innovative curriculum, is tested by showing the items to 14 experts in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language from different Iraqi universities, each with a different area of expertise.

Data Analysis

The researcher presented the first draft of the interview questions and checklist of observations to the jury members. Then, the jury members made modifications to the questions and checklist after giving a thorough reading of the interview questions and checklist of observation items. The jury members do not have any problems with any items of the checklist and questions of the tools . They mostly agreed that the checlist and quesions is complete and accurate in every way .

The researcher transcribed the audio data using Adobe Audition CS5, which facilitated efficient editing and playback of the audio file. The program displayed the audio file as a waveform, which helped in highlighting and replaying important segments. The approximate transcription method was used instead of analyzing interaction patterns to focus on understanding the teachers' intentions. The method was used to extract frequencies, clarifying questions, false starts, and similar elements. Punctuation was not coded as it was not necessary for interpretation. The process of transcribing all ten interviews was time-consuming. The researcher used Adobe

Audition CS5 to facilitate the process of listening to and transcribing the audio data. The useful features of the program make transcribing audio data more efficient, including the ability to listen to the data repeatedly without having to stop, pause, or manually transcribe each segment. Adobe Audition also offers the flexibility to adjust the speed of speech, allowing playback to be sped up or slowed down as needed.

Thematic analysis using NVivo proved to be a valuable approach for identifying patterns and themes in qualitative data. By organizing and categorizing the data, the researcher was able to group related information and explore the nuances within each topic. While initially time-consuming, the structured approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the data and a more focused analysis. The breakdown of themes into categories allowed for a nuanced exploration, enhancing the richness of the findings. Learning to use NVivo is a worthwhile investment, as it simplifies data analysis and provides effective tools for data management and interpretation. It is encouraging to know that using NVivo saved the researcher significant time and encouraged analytical thinking. Overall, this systematic approach using NVivo contributed to a more accurate and insightful analysis of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information of Teachers

The demographic data collected from the participants included age, gender, years of teaching experience, and educational background. This information was essential in understanding the diversity of the sample and its potential impact on the study results.

Table1: Demographic Information of Teachers

Participant's Name (pseudonym)	Gender	School Name	Degree	Average (mean) Teaching Experience
Teacher 1	M	Al-Mussyab	bachelor	
Teacher 2	M	Al-Hilla	bachelor	
Teacher 3	M	Babil	bachelor	
Teacher 4	M	Alexandria	bachelor	
Teacher 5	M	Imam Ali	bachelor	
Teacher 6	M	Al-Thawra	bachelor	
Teacher 7	M	Al Mashrouh	bachelor	
Teacher 8	M	Al _Mahaweel	bachelor	
Teacher 9	M	Al Faihaa	bachelor	10-20 years
Teacher 10	M	Alkindi	bachelor	

The structure of the data collection methods employed in this study (starting with vignettes, followed by main interviews, then, classroom observation, and ending with follow-up interviews) is organized in such a way as to collect data that will address the research questions. The research questions and anticipated data sources are given in Table 2

Table 2: The research questions and anticipated data sources

Research questions	Research tool	Vignettes questions	Interview questions
1. How do Iraqi preparatory English teachers perceive the new curriculum? a- What views do they hold about the reform?	First semi-structure interview.		How does he/she perceives the curriculum? • Are the contents of the curriculum suitable, useful, and adequate? If not, • In his/her opinion what are the most difficult part that students may encounter?
b- What intentions do they hold about teaching and learning and whether these intentions go against the agenda of the reform? c. How do teachers find the supporting documents (e.g., the teachers' book)?	Vignettes First interview.	What conceptualist or do teachers have about teaching and learning? What teaching views do teachers hold about Education, in general, but more particularly about English Language teaching?	What is the teacher's philosophy in teaching and learning? • Does he/she follows an established philosophy, or they have their own teaching philosophy? • Where is this philosophy acquired from? (e.g., teacher preparation program, teaching experience, reading, etc. • Has this philosophy changed or developed? (for example, in comparison to the philosophy of teaching the old curriculum) • How much have the present curriculum played a role in changing the teacher's teaching philosophy? • How does the teacher describe their teaching, before and after?
e. How do teachers consider the supporting documents. (e.g. teachers' book)	First interview		Dose the teacher use the teachers' book? • Is the teacher teaching recent curriculum as intended by teachers' book?
2- What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of dissemination the innovation? a- What is the model employed to disseminate the curriculum to the teachers?	First interview		How was the curriculum introduced to the teacher ?
b. How successful was the training? c. How could these perceptions affect teachers' classroom practice?	First interview		• Did teachers receive supportive training /teacher education with respect to teaching the present curriculum? • How these training / teacher education programs helped the teacher in their teaching practices?
	Classroom observation		Does the teacher implement CLT activities?

3- How do they implement CLT policies imposed by the reform in their classrooms? a. What constraints do teachers encounter in establishing a CLT environment?			• Is the teacher making listening activities? If not,
	Follow-up interview		• Why not? What difficulties, constraints, etc.
	Classroom observation		• Is the teacher making speaking activities? If not,
	Follow-up interview		• Why not? What difficulties, impediments, etc.
	Classroom observation		• Is the teacher creating/encouraging group work activities? If not,
	Follow-up interview		Why not? What obstacles, circumstances, etc.
	Classroom observation		How does he/she manage their time in order to complete the unit?
	Follow-up interview		Does he/she have enough time to complete the lesson? If no, Why he/she doesn't? What hurdles, complexity, etc.

Vignettes

The analysis of the vignettes' data addressed two key questions: What ideas do teachers have about teaching and learning? What views do teachers have about education in general and, more specifically, about English language teaching? Using the two philosophies, progressive and transmissive, helped the researcher connect teachers' responses to the question.

The vignette data revealed a variety of perspectives on teaching as a profession. The responses varied from one teacher to another. Such variations in responses were significant because they could inform the study about how teachers conceptualize teaching and learning. These conceptualizations might have an impact on their actual teaching and/or responses to changing curricula or practices, either positively or negatively. Many teachers' responses gave views about what proper teaching should be like.

Participants' overall perspectives on teaching and learning

Almost all teachers conceptualized teaching as a valuable profession that helps learners become effective members of society. For example, Teacher 3 (male) conceptualized teaching as follows:

Teaching is a noble profession in which teachers create a generation that makes a good society. The teacher is responsible for creating doctors and engineers who will serve their societies.

The aforementioned responses indicated that the teachers aimed to teach students in a manner that empowered them to explore and adapt to future changes. These teachers believed that they could achieve this by imparting knowledge to their students. Such views correspond with scholar-academic ideology (Schiro, 2013), which emphasizes that teaching and curriculum must be based on previous knowledge that has been created by the greatest people in the field. The

teachers, therefore, thought that their responsibility was to transfer to their students what they needed to know (Taylor, 2012). More importantly, the participants' views of teaching were likely to shape and affect their commitment to their careers and, hence, their classroom practice.

Participants' Responses and Understandings of the Philosophies of Education.

Understanding teachers' conceptions of these philosophies can help identify and interpret teachers' views about education and, more precisely, about English language education. The researcher employed the two vignettes to uncover the teachers' perspectives on teaching and learning.

Participants' Views about progressive Philosophy(learner-centered)

The researcher asked the teachers to share their perspectives on Huda's teaching philosophy. Responses to this question varied, including answers that were in favour of and against the philosophy of English language teaching. Despite the variation in responses, the results suggest that most of the teachers advocated a progressive philosophy of education in English language teaching and learning. For example, Teacher 1 (male) seems to share similar views as Huda when he says:

I agree with Huda 100%. Students must learn independently, and it is their responsibility to do so. If students rely completely on their teacher, the consequences will be disastrous.

Like Teacher 1, Teachers 5 (male), 9 (male), all appeared to hold a progressive philosophy of education.

I think the idea of cooperative learning is good. In this case, the students will have the opportunity to engage in discussions with their classmates. (Teacher 5)

It's such a good idea to use new strategies and methods in teaching. Teachers should instill self-reliance in their students by requiring them to perform all tasks, whether they are practical or oral. (Teacher 9)

These accounts indicate that the participating teachers generally held positive views of progressive education, as they agreed with the notion that students can achieve learning best through collaboration.

Participants' Views about the Transmissive Philosopher (teacher-centred)

The teachers expressed various concerns about Hassan's philosophy of education (transmissive philosophy). Most of the teachers' responses to the vignette were in line with a progressive view of education. For example, Teacher 10 (male) commented:

I would disagree with Hassan. I would assume that professionals have designed the curriculum using the most sophisticated developments in the field. Hassan should work on improving his teaching skills and keep up with the latest cutting-edge developments in the area. He should adapt himself to these teaching skill requirements.

Overall, the data related to the above two vignettes seems to confirm that most of the participants agreed with a progressive philosophy of English education. This was also evident in the findings from a sub-question for Vignette 2: How do you feel about incorporating new teaching strategies and methods? Almost all of the teachers (n = 7) reported that they found the current teaching methods useful. A few teachers, however, including those who also favored progressive education, considered the current teaching methods to be difficult to apply in practice.

Purpose of Education

the majority of participating teachers supported the learner-centered, progressive education ideology, they also agreed with the scholar-academic ideology, which emphasizes the teaching of accumulated knowledge, and the social efficiency ideology, which views the goal of education as creating an effective society.For instance, Teacher 3 (males) believed that the purpose of education was to help students.

They acquire the knowledge that the culture deems crucial for their existence. He said:

I also want to educate my students, introduce them to the best that has been known, and help them acquire knowledge and culture for their own good. I think that by doing this, my students will be happy in their lives.

Other teachers expressed views about education that corresponded more closely to social efficiency ideology. For example Teacher 2 (male) said:

We need to prepare a good generation. A generation that will be able to live adult lives. A good generation will create a very good society and eventually help the country.

Teacher 7 (male) expressed similar thoughts:

Students need to be prepared for adult life to know what adult life is like, what to expect, and what is good and bad about adult life. They will become effective members of their society and fight evil.

Like teacher 2 and 7 (male), Teacher 5 (male) also believed that education should include the teaching of morals to build a good society. He said:

We have to teach our students morals to be good people in society.

When asking the participants about the purposes of education, there was some evidence to suggest that many of them held not only the principles of learner-centered ideology but also those of scholar-academic ideology and social efficiency ideology. The differences in their views on education could explain why these perspectives influenced many of the teachers' classroom practices.

Interviews and the classroom observations

the findings derived from the two sets of interviews and the classroom observations. First, the researcher presented the findings of the two sets of interviews (main and follow-up). The researcher presented the findings in relation to the main themes identified in this data analysis, such as attitudes toward becoming a teacher, perceptions about the current curriculum, and

perceptions about CLT. Then, the researcher presented the findings derived from the participants' classroom observations. The researcher presented the classroom observation findings based on the items and checklists developed to gather the data. The data suggest that there are significant barriers to implementing the present English curriculum. Tables 3, 4, and 5 show some examples of how the themes and sub-themes emerged from this data coding.

Table 3: Themes and sub-themes derived from the first interview

Examples of the identified codes	Themes and sub-themes developed from the codes
I like teaching, and I've always wanted to be a teacher. Also, teaching is the best and only job you can get after you finish university. It is like a map: you study, you graduate, and then you teach.'	• Attitudes towards becoming an English language teacher • Teaching as the only job
The new curriculum is difficult, but it is more powerful and useful. The problem is that we still can't teach it. "I have studied teaching methodologies, but there isn't any practical side to them. I have received nothing regarding how to teach."	• Overall impressions of the current English language curriculum ▪ The lack of professional development (PD)
' I explain everything to my students. They do the homework. This is my role, and by doing this, they will become good students.'	• Intentions about teaching and learning • intentions about being teachers
' There was no preparation for us to receive the new curriculum. They instructed me to follow the existing curriculum and refer to the teacher's teacher's book.	• Intentions about the dissemination process

Table 4: Themes and sub-themes derived from the second interview

Examples of the identified codes	Themes and sub-themes developed from the codes
• 'Parents see us as experts with the right knowledge of the English language, and our task is to teach their children that knowledge.' • 'I always have a problem conducting group work activities because I don't have suitable desks that can help me do this activity. All of the desks here are very traditional desks.' "Time is important, and 40 minutes is too little. Remember, you need to teach the four skills.	• Perceptions about CLT • intentions about students' competence • intentions about local culture • intentions about physical constraints intentions about organizational

Table 5: Themes and sub-themes collected from the classroom observation

Examples of the required behavior or criteria	Observed behavior
The use of CLT	• CLT is used but not in the proper way
The use of relevant teaching methods	• Traditional methods used
Access to teaching aids	• Teachers had no access
The use of the teacher's teacher's book in relation to lesson preparation and initiation	• few teachers used the teacher's book
The teaching of grammar	• Traditional teaching approaches o Explicit grammar teaching

Teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening	o No commitment to teach the four skills by following each skill stages

The researcher proceed to outline in detail the findings in relation to the themes and sub-themes presented in the tables above.

Participants' Attitudes towards Becoming an English Language Teacher

With the exception of Teacher 8 and Teacher 1, all of the participants wanted to enter the teaching profession for various reasons that will be discussed in the following sections (Teacher 1 wanted to become an engineer, but he was forced to go into teaching, while teacher 8 chose teaching because it was the only career available to him). In Teacher 1's case, he said:

My father wanted me to be a teacher. I actually didn't want to be a teacher. I wanted to study engineering, and I felt that being a doctor could help me achieve a lot of what I dreamed of doing. I respect teachers, and I know that teaching is a good career, but I really wanted to be a doctor.

Despite expressing complaints about a few negative issues, the participants' overall positive attitudes towards the profession were apparent from their responses. Although they considered teaching the only possible career, the teachers expressed their willingness to teach and their happiness with the job. However, when it came to the actual teaching, the teachers appeared to face some serious constraints.

Perceptions of the Present English Language Curriculum

The findings presented in this section relate to Question 1 and Sub-Question 1: How do preparatory Iraqi teachers perceive the new curriculum? What views do they hold about the reform? Almost all of the participants expressed an interest in and positive attitudes towards the present curriculum, especially its content and the new teaching methods.

Teacher 2 (male) had similar reservations about the difficulty of teaching the present curriculum:

The teacher has a deeper understanding of certain topics than the curriculum creator, as we are familiar with our school and its students. The curriculum is not bad at all, but it is difficult to teach.

Certain factors contribute to the difficulties in teaching the current curriculum. The interviews reveal that two main factors influence the participants' classroom practices: (1) inadequate teacher education during their university education, and (2) inadequate professional development to assist them in teaching the current English language curriculum.

Lack of Professional Development

The participants' primary concern was the quantity and quality of the professional development that they received for implementing the present English curriculum. Regarding quantity, the participants believed that the professional development sessions provided at the time of implementation were insufficient. For example, Teacher 9 commented on this:

I didn't attend the training sessions, but a friend of mine told me that it was only a one-week training course, and that is silly because it is insufficient and incomplete. (Teacher 9, male)

In addition to issues about the quantity of professional development they received, there was an issue regarding non-attendance, as Teacher 9 mentioned above. All of the participant teachers also referred to issues with the quality of the sessions. Their concerns were captured in the following statements:

It was of poor quality, and the trainers didn't even show us how to teach. They only showed us the objectives of the new curriculum. I think they did this just to be able to say "we have done something" and escape accountability. (Teacher 7, male)

The training course and the support given were too weak and lacked a practical side. We needed to do some mock teaching before moving on to actual teaching. (Teacher 9, male)

The lack of teacher education and professional development seemed to have had a considerable impact on the teachers' acceptance of the present English curriculum and, hence, on their classroom practice. Britten (1988) made a good point in relation to the rejection of new teaching practices when he suggested that the less awareness of the usefulness and value of a certain method that teachers have, the more likely they are to reject it. What the researcher could understand from the teachers' statements is that they were not made aware of the usefulness and value of the new teaching method suggested in the present English language curriculum in Iraq.

It is widely recognized that continuous professional development or in-service training courses should be school-based to help teachers refresh their knowledge and pedagogical practice and to encourage the exchange of ideas among teachers in their own school . This might imply that training courses that are conducted outside of a school context are less likely to be effective.

Perceptions about Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The data reported in the following sections will relate to questions 2 and 3 and their sub-questions: What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of disseminating the innovation? How do they implement the CLT policies imposed by the reform in their classrooms? What constraints do teachers encounter in establishing a CLT environment? The present English language curriculum is based on the principles of communicative language teaching and cooperative learning. Teachers and students are expected to take on new classroom roles that differ from their old traditional roles.

In this curriculum, teachers were expected to take on a facilitating and monitoring role, while learners were expected to take on the role of negotiators, who were required to listen to their peers, join in with group or pair work, and reflect on their own learning. Although almost all of the teachers expressed an interest in teaching the present English language curriculum (as evidenced by their responses to the vignettes and to the interview questions), they seemed to find it challenging to assume their new responsibilities. Firstly, they believed that there were many physical and organizational constraints that made CLT difficult to implement. But more importantly, the teachers seemed to be affected by the beliefs that they held about the roles that they and their students should play in the classroom, as well as by their beliefs about students' weak independent learning abilities and about the local social culture. The following section will

first present the different types of views that teachers hold about CLT before moving on to present the physical and organizational constraints reported by the participant teachers.

Participants' Intentions (views) about Teachers' and Learners' Roles in the CLT Classroom

During the vignettes, almost all teachers expressed a positive attitude regarding their students taking on a more independent role, as well as regarding their roles as facilitators. However, in the interviews, more than half of the teachers participating in the interviews presented contrasting views with those they presented in response to the vignettes. Three participants believed that their role was to transfer knowledge that they thought was more useful to their students. This reflects the idea of traditional teaching (a transmissive approach). For example, Teacher 3 (male) stressed that his role in the classroom is to control and manage students' learning. He said:

I explain everything to my students. They do the homework. This is my role, and by doing this, they will become good students.

In discussing their views about the student's role, the teachers' voices also demonstrated their agreement with practicing traditional teaching methods. Some of the participants even suggested that their students' role in the class is to sit quietly and consume the knowledge passed down to them by their teachers. Such traditional views might well influence their commitment to teaching the present English curriculum.

In addition to expressing traditional views about the roles of teachers and students, some teachers also spoke very positively about a different role for students in the classroom. Participating teachers' perceptions of their students' roles as EFL learners included the following: Seeing them as cooperative learners, active learners, hardworking learners, and responsible learners. For example Teacher 1said :

I would estimate that learners bear 70% of the responsibility for their education. It is up to them to put in a lot of effort. No one will do it for them if they don't.

Teachers' views about the Local Culture

Regarding the impact of the local social culture on English language teaching and learning, many of the participant teachers expressed their concerns. They emphasized that their society perceives them as knowledge holders and classroom managers, and that it is their responsibility to impart this knowledge to their students. Teacher 8 (male) said:

Parents view us as experts with the right knowledge of the English language, and our task is to teach their students that knowledge.

Similarly, Teacher 2 (a male) and many others expressed concern about the public's perception of teachers' roles in the classroom. They said:

In people's minds, the image is that teachers are the source of information. There are a few parents who are well-educated and think that the students must work hard as well, but the majority depend on the teachers for everything, and they always blame us for their children's lack of achievement.

The Curriculum Dissemination Process

The data findings were similar to those from previous research studies and suggest that the participant teachers received little or no introductory training to familiarize them with the present English language curriculum. Some teachers stated that their only task was to instruct the curriculum. For example, Teacher 3 (male) said:

There was no preparation for us when we received the new curriculum. They instructed me to use the teacher's teacher's book and teach the curriculum as it is.

Others reported that several short programs introduced them to the present curriculum. After these short programs had ended, teachers were required to pass on what they had learned in the programs to their fellow teachers. For example, Teacher 8 (male) said:

They gave us short sessions about what the new curriculum contains, and that is it—no more, no less. Once they concluded, they instructed us to share the knowledge we gained from this program with our fellow teachers

The literature has extensively discussed and criticized this cascade model of curriculum dissemination from various perspectives. Arguably, having no prior knowledge of the new curriculum's philosophy and practices could exert too much pressure on the teachers to adhere to its objectives. Furthermore, it could affect students' motivation to learn a foreign language as the teachers might end up misusing the suggested new teaching practices, which in turn complicates or negatively affects the students' learning experiences.

Physical Constraints

The physical constraints had a primary impact on pair-work and speaking tasks. For example, Teacher 9 (male) found it difficult to carry out these activities due to a lack of suitable desks. He said:

I always have trouble conducting group work activities because I don't have good desks that can assist me. All of the desks in this area are very traditional.

Other teachers, such as Teacher 1, voiced similar complaints about skipping pair work activities because of the students' poor desk conditions. He said:

The classroom layout is not suitable for such activities at all. The classroom's desks, arranged in rows, are extremely old. We need some round tables so [the students] can face one another and discuss questions.

During the classroom observations, the teachers either skipped the listening and speaking activities or carried them out themselves. In the follow-up interview, the participants emphasized that the lack of appropriate infrastructure for teaching listening and speaking made it nearly impossible to work on these two skills. They blamed the educational authority for not providing the equipment required. They faced major constraints, including a lack of listening labs. Teacher 8 said:

We don't have enough equipment for conducting listening activities, even though students want to listen to English. Some teachers bring their own players to play the recording, but this is a stupid idea, I think, because it is not loud enough.

Organizational Constraints

Most of the teachers also reported that organizational constraints were an obstacle to their teaching. These mainly included the short class times, the large class sizes, and the examination system set out by the country's educational authority.

Almost all of the participants raised concerns about the lack of time allocated for English classes. The class duration ranged between 35 and 45 minutes, which most of the participants felt was insufficient. This had a significant impact on their teaching, particularly in the areas of listening, speaking, and writing, often resulting in them neglecting these skills.

While the participating teachers acknowledged the absence of listening labs for listening activities, they also acknowledged the limited duration of English classes. Teacher 9 (male), for example, said:

To practice listening, we must have good listening labs. Not only that, but we also need more time. Time is everything, I think.

Similarly, Teacher 10 (male) and Teacher 1 (male) said:

How can we teach listening when we don't have the right tools to do so? We need listening labs and more time. The time is too short [to] include such curriculum content. (Teacher 10, male)

To conduct listening activities successfully, you need a suitable place and extra time. Listening activities are extremely difficult. (Teacher 1, male)

The participants' complaints about the insufficient time allocated for covering these different materials can be justified by the large number of students in each English class. Indeed, the participant teachers frequently expressed concerns about the large class sizes. The observations from the classroom suggest that the teachers skipped some materials, either to accommodate the allocated time, because of the large number of students in the class, or because of their beliefs about these materials. Most of the teachers' responses in the follow-up interviews confirm these findings.

Conclusions

Initial interviews and vignette conversations with Iraqi preparatory English teachers showed alignment with the curriculum's learner-centered philosophy. However, classroom observations revealed a predominantly teacher-centered approach. Follow-up interviews indicated that teachers' intentions about curriculum implementation were incompatible with the learner-centered reforms, hindering their uptake of the new practices.

Interview data revealed that teachers found the support was insufficient. The lack of professional development programs led teachers to revert to traditional practices, undermining the

curriculum's principles. The interview data suggest that the curriculum reform in Iraq was only concerned with a holistic reform of the old English curriculum. Consequently, this left teachers feeling isolated; they were concerned that they were the only teachers who were required to change their teaching approaches.

Observations indicated a teacher-centered approach and traditional practices. Constraints included physical and organizational factors, intentions about students' learning capacities, local social culture, and roles in the classroom. These factors, along with insufficient support and an incompatible school culture, hindered the effective implementation of CLT and the new curriculum.

The school context and social culture also impact classroom practices. Participants lacked professional support and worked in environments unsuitable for cooperative learning. Despite the revised curriculum, traditional teaching methods still dominate, highlighting the need for comprehensive teacher training and professional development. It suggests the need for adaptation rather than outright adoption of CLT, aligning it with Iraq's unique social realities to develop a more appropriate pedagogy.

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