



ISSN: 2957-3874 (Print)

Journal of Al-Farabi for Humanity Sciences (JFHS)

<https://iasj.rdd.edu.iq/journals/journal/view/95>

مجلة الفارابي للعلوم الإنسانية تصدرها جامعة الفارابي

The Challenges Faced by Iraqi EFL Secondary School Teachers in Teaching English Language

Asst. Instr. Ahmed Sameer Hashim

Department of English language, College of Education Ibn Rushd for Human Sciences, University of Baghdad

Email: ahmed.h@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq

التحديات التي يواجهها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس المتوسطة العراقية عند

تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية

المدرس المساعد: احمد سمير هاشم

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية تربية ابن رشد للعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة بغداد

ملخص

هدفت هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تحديد أبرز المعوقات التي تواجه معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس المتوسطة العراقية عند تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. ووفقاً للدراسات والملاحظات، فإن نقص المواد الكافية، وامتلاك الفصول الدراسية، وضعف البنى التحتية، وانخفاض الرضا الوظيفي، هي العوائق الرئيسية أمام تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في العراق. جُمعت البيانات من ١٣٠ معلماً ومعلمة من مدارس عراقية من خلال استبيان معياري. وُحلت البيانات باستخدام إحصائية وصفية لتلخيصها وعرضها بطريقة هادفة. ودعمت النتائج الدراسات السابقة المتعلقة بامتلاك الفصول الدراسية، ونقص الوسائل والمواد التعليمية، وتدهور المرافق. علاوة على ذلك، وفيما يتعلق بعدم الرضا الوظيفي والراتب، ظهرت نتائج لافتة للنظر، حيث أعرب المعلمون عن استيائهم التام من الراتب ودوافع التدريس، مما أثر على أسلوبهم في التدريس وعلى نتائج الطلاب. وتُقدّم هذه الورقة البحثية الحد من امتلاك الفصول الدراسية، وتوفير المواد التعليمية، وتحسين مرافق المدارس، والتركيز على تدريب المعلمين، وتحسين رواتبهم. الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، تحديات الفصل الدراسي، تدريس اللغة التواصلية، المواد التعليمية، رواتب المعلمين.

Abstract

This paper aimed at specifying the leading obstacles which faced by Iraqi EFL secondary school teachers in teaching English language. According to studies and observations, lack of adequate materials, overcrowding classrooms, lack of infrastructures, and low job satisfaction are the main barriers to English language teaching in Iraq. Data were collected from 130 EFL teachers from Iraqi schools through a standard questionnaire. The data were analyzed using a descriptive statistic to summarize and present it in a meaningful way. The findings supported previous studies regarding the classroom overcrowding, lack of teaching aids and materials, and dilapidated facilities. Furthermore, regarding job dissatisfaction and salary, interesting and eye-catching results emerged as teachers expressed complete dissatisfaction with salary and motivation to teach which impacted their method of teaching as well as students' outcomes. This paper suggest that overcrowding classrooms must be decreased, provide educational materials, enhance schools' facilities, teacher training must be focused on, and finally teachers' salaries must be improved. **Key words:** EFL teaching, classroom challenges, communicative language teaching (CLT), teaching materials, teachers' salary.

1. Introduction

English today is an indispensable tool for international relations, trade, education and diplomacy. To individuals seeking greater educational and career opportunities, as the world becomes increasingly more connected through globalization, fluency in the English language has become a necessity. Given the importance of English as a global lingua franca, several countries, such as Iraq, have added English language classes to

their educational system to ensure that students have the English language skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world (Altufaili, 2016). In order to pursue higher education and career opportunities both domestically and abroad, students in Iraq must become proficient in English, which is a required secondary school subject (Alrickaby, 2024). Despite the emphasis on English education, Iraqi EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to deliver effective instruction and raise student learning outcomes. One of the most pressing issues is overcrowding in classrooms, which makes it difficult for teachers to provide each student with the individualized attention and feedback they need. Teachers' ability to employ interactive and modern teaching methods with their students is hampered by a lack of sufficient teaching resources, such as current textbooks, multimedia resources, and technical tools (Saeed, 2015). Additionally, bad school facilities, which include poor infrastructure, critically unmaintained classrooms, and insufficient seating will lead to inadequate learning environment (Barrett et al., 2019). Moreover, the absence of well-trained teachers whom are proficient in teaching English as well as the current teaching methods is another crucial issue. Many Iraqi teachers need adequate professional development opportunities to enhance their teaching methods and keep up-to-date with changes in language teaching (Songbatumis, 2017). According to (Weiqi, 2007) the poor salary of the teachers leads to high rates of frustration, general work unhappiness, and reduction of enthusiasm among English language teachers. Teachers' fondness and devotion to teaching could fade as soon as they struggle economically and feel unappreciated in their job, thus, sooner or later affects the standard of learning that students receive. These obstacles harm the educational system of English language and make it less effective as a whole as well as make it harder for students to become proficient in English. Addressing these problems will improve the language learning results and guarantee that Iraqi students can gain full benefit of what English language competency offers in terms of education and employment. The impact of learning English language is considerably frustrated by problems being encountered by Iraqi EFL teachers such as crowded classrooms, an inadequacy of instruction materials, aged infrastructures, insufficient payments of the teachers, and dissatisfaction at the workplace. These difficulties obstruct learners' chances to master English language that is critical to their school success and career development in the face of globalization by the day. They also have implications for the quality of instruction. The present study will explore the main barriers Iraqi EFL teachers encounter. The following research questions will guide this investigation:

1. What are the key challenges faced by Iraqi EFL teachers in providing effective English language teaching?
2. How do classroom environment, teacher materials, and facilities impact the quality of English language teaching in Iraqi secondary schools?
3. How does teacher's salary and job discontent impact effectiveness of English language teaching in Iraqi secondary schools?

1.1 Significance of the Study

The standard of English language teaching greatly influences students' academic outcomes and job opportunities in the future. However, there are multiple factors that contribute to the ineffectiveness of English language teaching in Iraqi secondary schools. Elements such as cramped classrooms, inadequate teaching materials, deteriorating school facilities, a shortage of experienced educators, and low teacher pay leading to job dissatisfaction all significantly affect teachers' ability to deliver quality instruction. These challenges impact teachers' enthusiasm and effectiveness, along with students' ability to learn English, which is essential for higher education and job opportunities in an increasingly interconnected world. This study seeks to explore the key challenges faced by Iraqi EFL instructors and their impact on teaching. It will highlight the current state of English education in Iraq by pinpointing these issues and their effects on teachers and students. Policymakers, schools, and stakeholders can use the findings of this paper to develop developing effective strategies to improve English teaching in Iraq. In order to enhance student outcomes, teacher effectiveness, and classroom environment, these obstacles must be reduced to the minimum.

2. Literature Review

This review of the literature looks into the challenges faced by Iraqi EFL secondary school teachers in teaching English language. Elements such as overcrowded classrooms, a lack of adequate teaching materials, dilapidated facilities, well-trained teachers, and low teacher's salary which leads to job discontent significantly impact the effective teaching of the English language.

1. Overcrowded classrooms: Overcrowded classrooms is one of the most prominent problems faced by Iraqi public education system. According to studies, developing new communication activities is so difficult for teachers specially in classes of 40-50 students (Saeed, 2015). Thus, due to the difficulty of supervising group

tasks, multiple interactions, and personalized feedback, teachers are forced to use group teaching instead of continuous interaction. Numerous studies indicated that large class sizes negatively impact teaching effectiveness (Almulla, 2015). For example, Cuseo (2007) study demonstrated that teachers face difficulty managing group activities in overcrowded classrooms due to cramped space and high noise levels, which hinder effective communication between students. Additionally, Blatchford and Russell (2020) stated that teachers usually count on the lecture technique in their classes with more than 45 students, this limits student's opportunities for participation and communication. These conditions lead to reduced engagement and poor academic performance, making it difficult to monitor student progress, provide immediate feedback, and meet individual learning needs. Large classrooms pose challenges beyond the scope of normal teaching. As teachers strive to address problematic behavior, enforce order, and ensure student concentration, they find themselves faced with an increasingly difficult classroom management battle. Issa and Jamil (2010) note that overcrowded classrooms in Iraqi schools have been linked to decreased academic motivation and increased absenteeism, due to students' inability to receive the required individualized attention. Furthermore, international studies have shown that smaller class sizes can produce positive outcomes for students, such as enhanced teacher-student interaction, improved comprehension, and higher participation rates, as reported by (Blatchford et al., 2011) in the United Kingdom and (Finn et al., 2003) in the United States.

2. Lack of adequate teaching materials: One of the most significant challenges facing English language teaching in public schools in Iraq is the severe shortage of appropriate educational resources. This significantly impacts the quality of education and undermines students' ability to master the English language. Iraqi public schools are a constant victim of limited funding, which hinders them from providing essential supplies such as modern textbooks, advanced audio-visual equipment, and other essential materials that ensure effective language learning (Saeed, 2015). Additionally, the application of contemporary, technology-based, interactive teaching methods, which aim to enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes, faces substantial constraints. These constraints arise from the deficiency of suitable access to needed technologies such as smartboards and internet connectivity, a problem that is particularly made worse in rural regions (Serin, 2022). In addition, these problems have been compounded by periods of prolonged instability and conflict in Iraq, which have led to a shortage of appropriate educational tools (IOM, 2018). Public school students in Iraq will continue to face difficulties in mastering the English language unless these barriers are addressed (Al-Azawei et al., 2016). Nevertheless, in order to successfully apply the communicative language teaching approach, teachers should have access to technology, supplemental materials, and video supplies. But according to a study, many Iraqi schools need enhances in their fundamental supplies such as projectors, labs, and smartboards (Al-Jubouri, 2018). Thus, according to Mohammad et al. (2024) it is hard for teachers to create interactive and enjoyable classes without using these materials. Hence, these obstacles will hinder teachers' ability follow and use CLT approach in their classrooms, which suggested in teacher's book.

3. dilapidated facilities: Iraq's poor school infrastructure poses a significant challenge to achieving quality education. Many public schools operate in extremely difficult conditions. Thousands of school buildings have been damaged, overcrowded, or rendered unusable as a result of years of conflict, economic instability, and severe funding shortages. More than 1,400 schools are deemed hazardous because of structural problems, and more than 5,000 schools nationwide need urgent restoration (Chachan, 2024). Additionally, only 18% of public schools have access to essential amenities like clean water, power, and sanitary facilities. Many schools have been forced to adopt double or triple shifts due to a lack of classroom space, reducing the effectiveness of modern teaching methods, as students receive only a few hours of instruction per day. Deteriorating school performance, high absenteeism rates, and increased dropout rates are all consequences of these harsh conditions, particularly affecting children from low-income families and displaced persons (Alraie & Breesam, 2018). In addition, the weather issue made it worse and extremely hard for students to focus during lessons because of classroom temperatures. In summer, the temperature can go up to 45 degrees Celsius without air conditioning. In winter, the condition isn't better, many students are absent from schools due to the illnesses which caused by the lack of heating systems in their classrooms. Moreover, the lack of desks and chairs is another problem faced by Iraqi schools with a percentage of 40%, which forces students in some cases to sit on the grounds or use broken desks and chairs. This unpleasant learning environment might gradually decrease students' motivation and outcomes (Qumri, 2009). Iraq's government gives about 5% of its national budget to the education sector. This budget is considered very low if compared to countries like Jordan who spend 11% and Saudi Arabia with 17%. Thus, Investments in school infrastructure in Iraq is very low. Between 2014 & 2017, cities like Mosul,

Salah Al-Din, and Anbar were vastly damaged due to the war against ISIS. Thus, around 50% of the schools in these cities were severely damaged or completely destroyed. Therefore, many significant delays in school rebuilding efforts were caused by continued shortages in funding. Even with the international aids from UNICEF, UNESCO, and World Bank, the progress was very slow due to many reasons such as corruption, ineffective bureaucracy, and political instability (Jaime & Elisabeth, 2023). According to the Iraqi Ministry of Education (2021) a National Education Strategy 2021–2030 was introduced by the government in 2021 and the goal was to build 3,500 new schools and refurbishing 8,000 old ones by the year 2030.

4. Untrained teachers: Many Iraqi EFL teachers have a little or nearly no experience with communicative language teaching method which suggested in “teacher’s book” because of the lack of teachers training programs. Teachers mostly focus on the theoretical part of English language instruction rather than the emphases on the communicative teaching methods. One major factor that impact the implementation of communicative approach is the standardized tests, these tests usually assess the reading and grammar sides of the text book and neglecting communication competency. Hence, teachers usually teach students vocabulary, reading, and grammar rules in order to prepare students for exams instead of interacting with students in meaningful ways. Focusing on preparing students for exams and support teacher-centered education will hinder the successful application of communicative language teaching (CLT) (Audil & Mustafa, 2024). Modern educational technologies rely primarily on teacher training. Based on research, teachers tend to use communicative methods in the classroom when they receive practical training in CLT and have the opportunity to observe best educational practices. However, many teachers in Iraq express dissatisfaction with the lack of continuing professional development initiatives necessary to support this change (Zainab & Abdel Mehdi, 2015).

5. teachers’ dissatisfaction that leads job discontent: Akiba et al. (2012) and Ali (2009) stated that the payment and job dissatisfaction of teachers severely impact the educational quality and teachers’ motivation. If taken into account the credentials, workload, efforts, and services to society, teachers are usually poorly paid in many countries. As a result, teachers’ devotion and passion in their work will decrease and they may suffer financially due to the stress brought on by low salaries. However, other researchers claimed that the teachers’ performance wasn’t greatly affected by the increasement of teachers’ salaries, in fact the effect was Barely noticeable, thus, students’ performance wasn’t improved or enhanced (Cabrera & Webbink, 2020; Hanushek et al., 1999). Moreover, a study in Indonesia discovered that when teacher’s payment was improved, teacher’s job dissatisfaction was decreased as well as the financial stress, however, it had no effect on students’ performance (Menno & Rogers, 2016). Despite widespread replication, teacher payment and students’ academic achievement have a solid relationship. However, there is little solid scientific evidence specifically for Iraq. New studies are scarce; they do not rigorously examine how Iraqi teachers have impacted their teaching abilities or the academic achievement of their students. This lack of specialized studies highlights the urgent need for additional research. These studies are essential to achieve a comprehensive understanding of financial incentives at the general educational level in secondary schools in Iraq. The previous factors like overcrowded classrooms, a lack of adequate teaching materials, dilapidated facilities, untrained teachers, and teachers’ salaries and job discontent collectively hinder the effectiveness of the English language teaching.

3. Methodology

In order to investigate the challenges faced by the EFL teachers in Iraq, this paper employed a quantitative research design by using a questionnaire-based survey. Several factors that influence the effectiveness of English language teaching in secondary schools in Iraq were studied and investigated. A questionnaire was designed to collect data from English language teachers in secondary schools. The questionnaire concentrated on the key challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of materials, poor school facilities, job satisfaction, and low salaries. This section of research methodology outlines the detailed process used for selecting participants, designing instruments, and analyzing data.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was suitable because it can be used to collect a large volume of data from teachers. The data collected were used to explore common trends, challenges, and obstacles which affected the quality of English language teaching. A descriptive research helped by gathering information on the participants’ current situations without manipulating the variables (Creswell, 2014). By using this design, the study identified significant challenges faced by teachers and examined how these challenges impacted their teaching methods, teacher satisfaction, and student outcomes. Additionally, the

study aimed at providing valuable perception into the educational challenges in Iraq's public schools, and offered practical recommendations for improving the English language teaching system.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population for this study consisted of English teachers in secondary school who work in public schools across Iraq. To ensure diversity and representativeness, a random sampling method was used. This allowed each teacher in the population to have an equal chance of being selected. The sampling approach helped avoid bias that may result from selecting specific regions or teacher demographics (Creswell, 2014; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2019). In addition, to ensure a reliable and valid sampling size number as well as to maintain controllable data collection and analysis, 130 teachers participated in this study (Moser & Kalton, 2017). Also, factors like regional variation in school materials and infrastructure were considered due to the use of the random sampling approach and also because the results were generalized across the country.

Lastly, the demographic data were recorded in terms of years of experience, educational qualifications, and gender. These elements gave a supplementary vision into how various backgrounds and teaching experience could affect the understandings of teaching challenges.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire was the main tool used to collect the data of the study. The researcher favored this instrument because it allowed a systematic collection of data from large number of respondents in a quite short time (Dörnyei, 2007). Structured closed-ended questions were used to gather quantitative data like the use of the Likert scale and multiple-choice questions. These questions aimed at capturing the teachers' perceptions on the challenges they face in teaching English, classroom materials, and job satisfaction.

The questionnaire consisted of four main sections:

1. Teacher Demographics: This section gathered basic information such as the teacher's age and years of teaching experience.
2. Challenges in Teaching English: This section explored the key challenges faced by teachers in teaching English language. Teachers were asked rating to which degree overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, inadequate professional development opportunities, and other obstacles affect teachers' ability to teach effectively. These items were rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very significantly).
3. Classroom Materials and Facilities: This section examined the availability of necessary teaching materials, including textbooks, multimedia tools, technology (e.g., computers, projectors), and the condition of school infrastructure. Teachers were asked to assess the quality and availability of these materials and how they impacted teachers' ability to teach effectively. Moreover, teachers were asked to evaluate the condition of school facilities, including classroom space, seating arrangements, lighting, and temperature equipment.
4. Teacher's dissatisfaction which leads to job discontent: This section investigated the relation between teachers' dissatisfaction and job discontent. Teachers were asked about their satisfaction with their salary, job responsibilities, and opportunities for career advancement. The questions explored whether teachers feel valued in their profession and whether these feelings influence their teaching performance.

3.4 Data Analysis Once the data were collected, the researcher analyzed it using descriptive statistics to summarize and present the data in a meaningful way. The data were coded and entered into statistical software program (Excel). The analysis technique used was the descriptive analysis. Descriptive statistics included the calculation of frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. These measures helped to identify patterns in the responses, such as the most common challenges teachers face or the level of satisfaction with teaching materials and salary (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2011).

3.5 Ethical Considerations Ethical principles guided the entire research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Respondents were completely informed about the study's aims, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were ensured, and all data were stored securely. No personal identifiers were collected, and the data were used solely for the purposes of academic research (BERA, 2018).

4. Findings

This part of the study presents results based on data collected from EFL teachers in Iraqi secondary schools using a standardized questionnaire. Looking into the main challenges to effective teaching of English language was the main goal of this study in Iraq. In order to examine these data which gathered from 130 teachers, a descriptive statistic was used like means, frequencies, and percentages. The results are arranged in accordance with the three major questions of the study.

Table 4.1: Demographic Distribution of EFL Teachers by Gender, Age, and Class Level.

The demographic profile of the respondents shows a balanced representation of gender with 67 male and 63

Gender	1st classes	Interm	2nd classes	Interm	3rd Intermediate c	Total
Female	20		24		19	63
Age under 25	1		3		6	10
Age 25 - 34	12		10		3	25
Age 35 - 44	4		9		7	20
Age 45 - 54	3		2		3	8
Male	29		16		22	67
Age Under 25	4		3		1	8
Age 25 - 34	15		3		4	22
Age 35 - 44	5		7		12	24
Age 45 - 54	2		3		4	9
Age 55 and above	3				1	4
Total	49		40		41	130

female teachers taking part in the study. Forty-nine teachers taught first intermediate classes, forty taught second intermediate classes, and forty-one taught third intermediate classes.

Level of Education	Years of Experience				Total
	1 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	Less than 1 year	More than 10 years	
Bachelor's Degree	43	34	16	18	111
Master's Degree	1	6	1	2	10
PhD		3		6	9
Total	44	43	17	26	130

Table 4.2: Distribution of EFL Teachers by Level of Education and Years of Teaching Experience.

The number of EFL teachers appears in this table is categorized by their years of teaching experience and highest level of education. The majority of teachers have one to five years of experience, and the majority have a bachelor's degree. Only a small percentage of teachers have more than ten years of experience, and fewer hold Master's or PhD degrees.

4.1 The key challenges faced by Iraqi EFL teachers

The perceived difficulties that teachers have in the classroom are looked at in this section. Six major statements about classroom settings and teaching procedures were assessed by respondents on a five-point scale that went from "Not at all" to "Very Significantly." Both the frequency (number of replies) and the percentage distribution of perceptions are included in the data, providing information about how serious these issues are thought to be in the context of education.

Table 4.3: Perceived Challenges in Classroom Environment and Instructional Practices

According to the findings, a serious concern was risen when 55% of the respondents claimed that classroom

Statements	Not at all		Slightly		Moderately		Significantly		Very Significantly	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.The classrooms are overcrowded.	15	11 %	10	8%	12	9%	21	16 %	72	55 %
2.Difficulty in giving individual attention to students.	6	5%	25	19 %	13	10 %	30	23 %	56	43 %
3.Student behavior issues caused by overcrowding.	9	7%	17	13 %	15	12 %	33	25 %	56	43 %
4.Pressure to teach to the test instead of focusing on communication skills	8	6%	9	7%	10	8%	49	38 %	54	42 %
5.Limited student participation due to teacher-centered instruction	8	6%	15	12 %	17	13 %	40	31 %	50	39 %
6.Lack of practical training in communicative teaching methods	7	5%	14	11 %	19	15 %	38	29 %	52	40 %

overcrowding was a very serious problem. The challenge of giving each student an individualized attention, which 43% of respondents evaluated as extremely significant, is closely related to this impression. Similarly, 43% of respondents stated that overcrowding classroom lead to student behavior issues and class disorder. Instructional concerns were also dominant: 70% of respondents claimed that teacher-centered way of teaching restricted student participation, and 80% of teachers think that pressure to teach as a preparation for tests took the attention away from the emphasis on communication skills. Additionally, respondents with percentage of 69 said that a major or very significant difficulty is the absence of training programs in communicative language teaching method. Previous studies regarding the overcrowding classroom and teaching difficulties in Iraq closely match the results in this study. The findings in the study of Issa and Jamil (2010) were supported in this study with 55% teachers believe that classroom overcrowding is a serious issue and 43% say that the overcrowding problems cause behavioral issues for students. Similarly, Almulla (2015) and Cuseo (2007) stated that the space constraints and high noise levels in large classes impact group activities and meaningful interaction which this study supported with significant 43% respondents claiming that it is difficult to provide individualized teaching. Furthermore, Audil and Mustafa (2024) argued that the Iraqi exams system doesn't prioritize the communicative skills. This claim supported the results of this study with 80% of the teachers (participants) stated that they felt under pressure to focus on teaching as preparation for exams. Blatchford and Russell (2020) found that overcrowding forces teachers to use lecture-based instruction, this study found that 70% of participants stated the dominance of teacher-centered approach in the teaching technique used in the classroom. In a similar vein, the survey findings say that 69% of respondents showed a lack of practical training in communicative methods as a significant issue, Zainab and Abdel Mehdi (2015), stated that there is a lack of professional development opportunities and the theoretical nature of teacher training programs in Iraq. The survey and previous studies collectively support a common theme, exam-driven instruction, overcrowded classrooms, and poor teacher preparation severely limit the successful use of communicative language teaching in Iraqi schools.

4.2 Classroom environment, teacher materials, and facilities

The survey data below in table 4.4 shows the sufficiency of the materials used to teach English language in Iraqi schools. The findings show that there is a general deficiency in the availability and quality of the educational

Statements	Very poor		Poor		Fair		Good		Excellent	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.Availability of English textbooks	33	25 %	24	19 %	42	32 %	18	13 %	13	10 %
2.Supplementary reading materials (e.g., storybooks, novels)	75	58 %	30	23 %	10	8%	9	7%	6	5%
3.Audio-visual materials (CDs, videos, etc.)	50	39 %	29	22 %	29	22 %	13	10 %	9	7%
4.Projectors and screens	82	63 %	22	17 %	5	4%	15	12 %	6	5%
5.Computers/language labs	89	69 %	19	15 %	11	9%	7	5%	4	3%
6.Multimedia or interactive materials	48	37 %	24	19 %	32	25 %	18	14 %	8	6%

materials. The table below show the numbers and percentages of these results.

Table 4.4: The Availability of English Language Learning Materials in Schools

A significant number of respondents assessed the availability of essential resources as "very poor" or "poor," indicating structural difficulties in facilitating successful English language teaching. The availability of computers and language labs was specifically assessed as "very poor" by 69% of respondents, showing a serious lack of access to digital learning settings that are essential for language acquisition. In a similar vein, 63% of respondents were unhappy with the accessibility of projectors and screens, which are necessary for providing multimedia-based education. Supplementary reading materials, such as storybooks and novels, also earned critical reviews, with 58% of participants noting a "very poor" availability. Furthermore, 39% of respondents said that there were "very poor" audio-visual resources available, and 37% said the same about multimedia or interactive resources. A quarter of respondents rated the availability of English textbooks, which are the foundation of language training, as "very poor," and another 19% as "poor."According to earlier researches by Saeed (2015); Serin (2022); and Al-Jubouri (2018), many factors effect the teaching and adoption of communicative language teaching method (CLT) such as the lack of basic teaching aids, limited access to technology, and constant underfunding. Therefore, these claims are consistent with the findings in this study. Additionally, larger infrastructure problems can be caused due to the lack of interactive and multimedia resources. These findings are in line with Chachan's (2024) description of the deteriorating condition of many Iraqi schools. Furthermore, Audil and Mustafa (2024) stated that the application of modern teaching techniques became harder due to the shortage of teachers with the necessary training. Finally, the statistics from this study and other studies highlighted how urgently better infrastructure, materials, and teacher preparation are needed to improve English language teaching in Iraq.The preceding findings emphasized the inadequate instructional materials for English language learning. The following table turns the attention to the physical aspects of the school environment, which also significantly influence the total efficacy of education.

Statements	Very poor		Poor		Fair		Good		Excellent	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.Classroom size and seating arrangement	41	32 %	34	26 %	35	27 %	16	12 %	4	3%
2.Lighting and ventilation in classrooms	36	28 %	29	22 %	37	29 %	19	15 %	9	7%

3.Availability of heating in winter	73	56 %	32	25 %	8	6%	10	8%	7	5%
4.Availability of cooling in summer	80	62 %	28	22 %	4	3%	9	7%	9	7%
5.Condition of furniture (desks, chairs)	40	31 %	44	34 %	21	16 %	16	12 %	9	7%
6.Cleanliness and sanitation facilities	39	30 %	30	23 %	34	26 %	15	12 %	12	9%

Table 4.5: The Physical Aspects of School Environment

Concerns about classroom size and seating arrangements are common, according to the statistics on table 4.5, 32% of respondents calling it "very poor" and 26% calling it "poor." This supports the finding by Alraie and Breesam (2018) that a large number of Iraqi schools use a double- or triple-shift arrangement as a result of congestion and inadequate facilities. Students and teachers also gave the lighting and ventilation rates a moderate to poor grade, with 28% calling it "very poor" and 22% calling it "poor." These results are consistent with those of Qumri (2009), who highlighted the negative effects of inadequate ventilation and lighting on student motivation and engagement in the classroom. According to this part of the survey, the most noticeable problem is the inadequate temperature regulation. More specifically, 62% of the participants said that summer cooling systems are "very poor" and 56% of respondents said the same about the winter heating. These results suggest that this problem is common and also supported by other studies such as Qumir's (2009) findings which stated that the sever winter and intense summer in Iraq severely disrupt the learning process where these changes cause discomfort for students. Chachan (2024) added that it is not just an issue of discomfort. This has a direct impact on attendance, focus, and the general wellbeing of students, especially, when classroom temperatures can reach 45°C, makes the space uninhabitable for both teachers and pupils due to the lack of cooling equipment during the summer. According to the survey, another urgent issue appeared when 65% of the respondents stated that the classroom desks were either "very poor" or "poor". These results came in line with Qumri (2009), who found that 40% of Iraqi schools are poorly equipped with desks, requiring pupils to sit on the ground on some schools. These circumstances made it harder for students to interact with the teacher and peers in a meaningful way, thus, the classroom becomes physically and emotionally uncomfortable. Lastly, regarding the hygiene and sanitation of school facilities, 53% of the respondents described it as a poor or very poor. Moreover, Chachan's (2024) supported these results in his study when he found that only 18% of Iraqi public schools have access to sanitary restrooms and clean water.

4.3 Salary and job discontent impact effectiveness of English language teaching

Important details about the financial and motivational experiences of English teachers in Iraq are revealed by the descriptive analysis of table 4.6 below, especially with regard to professional motivation, working circumstances, and payment satisfaction. According to the research, teachers appear to be somewhat unhappy with their pay and how it affects their productivity and general morale.

Statements	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I am satisfied with my current salary as an English teacher.	61	47 %	38	29 %	10	8%	20	15 %	1	1%
My income allows me to focus on my job without financial stress.	42	32 %	45	35 %	14	11 %	25	19 %	4	3%
I feel respected and valued in my role as a teacher.	9	7 %	5	4 %	14	11 %	53	41 %	49	38 %
I have opportunities for professional growth and career advancement.	14	11 %	40	31 %	31	24 %	36	28 %	9	7%

I feel motivated to try new teaching strategies.	5	4 %	14	11 %	14	11 %	75	58 %	22	17 %
I feel satisfied with my current working conditions.	18	14 %	61	47 %	29	22 %	17	13 %	5	4 %
My dissatisfaction with salary affects the way I teach.	15	12 %	23	18 %	21	16 %	56	43 %	15	12 %
I would leave the profession if a better-paid opportunity arose.	23	18 %	59	45 %	14	11 %	16	12 %	18	14 %

Table 4.6: Job Satisfaction of English Language teachers

Significantly, 76% of respondents disagreed (29%) or strongly disagreed (47%) with the statement, "I am satisfied with my current salary as an English teacher." Similarly, 67% of respondents disagreed (32% strongly disagree, 35% disagree) when asked if their income enables them to concentrate on their work without financial concern. This indicates that monetary compensation is a major cause of stress that may jeopardize English teachers' professional commitment, highlighting a widespread sense of financial strain among them. However, responses to statements about motivation and professional respect reveal a more favorable trend, regardless of financial difficulties. A sizable majority (79%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I feel respected and valued in my role as a teacher," suggesting that social acceptance could partially offset financial discontent. Additionally, a positive sign of pedagogical dedication in spite of outside restraints is the 75% of respondents who said they feel inspired to explore new teaching techniques.

The results regarding working conditions and professional growth, however, paint a more nuanced picture. 42% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they had prospects for professional progress, compared to just 35 percent who agreed or strongly agreed. Furthermore, a noteworthy 61% of educators voiced discontent with their present working circumstances, supporting earlier research on the difficult infrastructure in Iraqi schools. Finally, the effect of financial discontent on the quality of teaching is especially concerning. Fifty-five percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their teaching style is impacted by their salary discontent. Furthermore, 59% of respondents said they would quit teaching if a better-paying position became available, indicating a risk of teacher turnover brought on by financial difficulties.

These findings are in line with earlier research that highlights how poor pay and financial stress reduce teacher motivation and educational quality, such as Akiba et al. (2012) and Ali (2009). These international findings are reflected in the Iraqi environment, confirming that instructors who get inadequate pay frequently find it difficult to remain enthusiastic and dedicated to their jobs. The current findings corroborate Menno and Rogers (2016), who observed that salary increases in Indonesia improved job satisfaction and reduced stress, even if they did not increase student achievement. This is in contrast to Cabrera and Webbink (2020) and Hanushek et al. (1999), who contend that raising teacher salaries alone may not directly improve student outcomes.

Thus, to sum up, this study's results offer a thorough summary of the various difficulties experienced by EFL instructors in secondary schools in Iraq. The findings point to important barriers that prevent the use of communicative language teaching strategies, such as packed classrooms, a lack of one-on-one student attention, and the need to teach for standardized assessments. The results also highlight the severe absence of infrastructure and necessary teaching tools, including multimedia materials, textbooks, and appropriate classroom settings, which exacerbates the challenges of instruction. Widespread discontent with pay and working conditions has also become a significant issue, with financial strain having an adverse effect on teacher morale and possibly influencing retention and instructional quality. Despite these obstacles, a large number of educators conveyed a strong sense of pride in their work and a drive to innovate, indicating that there is room for substantial progress in English language instruction in Iraq with focused increases in funding, training, and pay.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This study highlights three main areas—the instructional environment, the availability of materials, and the professional conditions—to explain the complex issues faced by EFL teachers in secondary schools in Iraq.

1. **Instructional challenges:** The ability of teachers to successfully regulate student conduct and give individualized attention is greatly impacted by overcrowded classrooms, which have become a major concern. The use of communicative language teaching (CLT) techniques, which are essential for improving students' language proficiency, is further limited by the need to get them ready for standardized examinations. Due in large part to classroom limitations, the dependence on teacher-centered approaches reduces student connection and participation.

2. **Insufficient materials and infrastructure:** The quality of English training is seriously harmed by inadequate physical infrastructure and instructional resources. There have been reports of severe shortages in multimedia tools, audio-visual aids, supplemental reading resources, and textbooks. The issue is made worse by inadequate classroom amenities, which include inadequate heating and cooling, poor ventilation, and inferior furniture and sanitation. These elements create an atmosphere that is not favorable to learning.

3. **Teacher Satisfaction and Professional Well-being:** Many EFL teachers expressed financial unhappiness, with most saying that poor pay had a detrimental influence on their motivation and efficacy as teachers. In spite of this, many educators said they were eager to try out new teaching methods and felt a great sense of respect for their jobs. However, there is a risk of teacher attrition due to a lack of professional development opportunities and discontent with working conditions.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Minimize class sizes and reorganize teaching methods:

- By hiring more skilled teachers and building more classrooms where practical, the Ministry of Education should make lowering student-teacher ratios a top priority.
- To shift from conventional lecture-based teaching strategies to interactive, student-centered learning that fosters communicative competence, training programs must be put in place.

2. Increase the availability of technology and teaching materials:

- Multimedia resources, supplemental materials, and current and adequate English textbooks must be available in schools.
- To support contemporary teaching techniques, investments should be made in digital instruments like computers and language labs.

3. Improve the Physical Facilities:

- It is imperative that classroom conditions be immediately improved, especially by providing enough seats, suitable lighting, heating and cooling systems, and sanitary facilities.
- These adjustments are crucial for comfort as well as for keeping students' attention and lowering absenteeism.

4. Improve Career Development and Teacher Compensation:

- The expense of living and the demands of their jobs as professionals must be taken into consideration when evaluating and modifying teacher pay.
- To preserve motivation and the high standard of instruction, structured career development pathways and ongoing professional training in CLT approaches should be put in place.

5. Policy Reform and Stakeholder Engagement:

- The exam-focused educational system should be reexamined by policymakers to include tests that emphasize communication skills over rote memory.
- The technical and financial assistance required for improvements in professional development, infrastructure, and curriculum design can be obtained through cooperation with international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

By addressing these systemic issues through targeted and sustainable interventions, Iraq can create a more supportive and effective environment for English language teaching. These efforts will not only benefit teachers but also enhance students' linguistic abilities and overall educational outcomes.

References

- Akiba, M., Chiu, Y. L., Shimizu, K., & Liang, G. (2012). Teacher salary and national achievement: A cross-national analysis of 30 countries. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 53, 171-181.
- Al-Azawei, A., Parslow, P., & Lundqvist, K. (2016). Barriers and opportunities of e-learning implementation in Iraq: A case of public universities. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 17(5).

- Ali, A. (2009). The impact of teacher wages on the performance of students: evidence from PISA. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*. <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/18252/>
- Almulla, M. A. (2015). An Investigation of Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects of Class Size on Teaching. *International Education Studies*, 8(12), 33-42.
- Alraie, A. A., & Breesam, H. K. (2018). Evaluation of School Buildings Projects in Iraq. *International Journal of Engineering Research & Technology (IJERT)*, 7(3), 165-164.
- Alrickaby, A. (2024). A Reading in the History of English Language Education in Iraq. *Bulletin of Advanced English Studies (BAES)*, 9(1).
- Altufaili, I. R. (2016). *Education policy and practices of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Iraq* [Master's thesis, Missouri State University]. <https://bearworks.missouristate.edu/theses/2363>
- Amin, M. Y. M. (2017). English language teaching methods and reforms in English curriculum in Iraq; an overview. *Journal of University of Human Development*, 3(3), 578-583.
- American Psychological Association. (2017). *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct*. APA. <https://www.apa.org/ethics/code>
- Audil, A. F., & Mustafa, H. R. (2024). From Theory to Classroom: Examining Communicative Language Teaching Practices in Iraq. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 13(4), 2146-2159.
- Barrett, P., Treves, A., Shmis, T., & Ambasz, D. (2019). *The Impact of School Infrastructure on Learning: A Synthesis of The Evidence*. World Bank Publications.
- Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., & Brown, P. (2011). Examining the effect of class size on classroom engagement and teacher-pupil interaction: Differences in relation to pupil prior attainment and primary vs. secondary schools. *Learning and instruction*, 21(6), 715-730.
- Blatchford, P., & Russell, A. (2020). *Rethinking class size: The complex story of impact on teaching and learning* (p. 328). UCL Press.
- British Educational Research Association (BERA). (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research* (4th ed.). BERA. <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>
- Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Cabrera, J. M., & Webbink, D. (2020). Do higher salaries yield better teachers and better student outcomes? *Journal of Human Resources*, 55(4), 1222-1257.
- Chachan, M. J. (2024). The contemporary education system in Iraq and Kurdistan. In F. Bartels, M. Vierbuchen, & C. Hillenbrand (Ed.), *Inclusive (Teacher) Education after War*, (pp. 87). Waxmann Verlag.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Cuseo, J. (2007). The empirical case against large class size: Adverse effects on the teaching, learning, and retention of first-year students. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, 21(1), 5-21.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford University Press.
- Drost, E. A. (2011). Validity and reliability in social science research. *Education Research and Perspectives*, 38(1), 105-123.
- Finn, J. D., Pannozzo, G. M., & Achilles, C. M. (2003). The "why's" of class size: Student behavior in small classes. *Review of educational research*, 73(3), 321-368.
- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2019). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (10th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Gravetter, F. J., & Wallnau, L. B. (2011). *Essentials of statistics for the behavioral sciences*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J., & Rivkin, S. G. (1999). Do higher salaries buy better teachers?. *National Bureau of economic research*. DOI 10.3386/w7082
- Iraq Ministry of Education. (2021). *National Education Strategy 2021-2030*. Baghdad: MOE Publications.
- Issa, J. H., & Jamil, H. (2010). Overview of the education system in contemporary Iraq. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(3), 360-386.

- Jaime, S., & Elisabeth, S. (2023, August 01). *Iraq: New schools and improved learning bring hope to the poorest children, but more is needed*. World Bank. https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/arabvoices/iraq-new-schools-and-improved-learning-bring-hope-poorest-children-more-needed?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Littlewood, W. (2014). Communication-oriented language teaching: Where are we now? Where do we go from here? *Language Teaching*, 47(3), 349–362.
- Menno, J. D. R. K. M., & Rogers, P. H. (2016). Double for Nothing? Experimental Evidence on the Impact of an Unconditional Teacher Salary Increase on Student Performance in Indonesia. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. DOI 10.3386/w21806
- Mohammad, R., Jebbar, M. B., & Rajayi, S. (2024). Exploring difficulties faced by Iraqi teachers in teaching English in “English for Iraq” textbook. *Teaching and Learning English for Specific Purposes*, 1(2), 48-60.
- Moser, C. A., & Kalton, G. (2017). *Survey methods in social investigation*. Routledge.
- Qumri, S. (2009). The tragic reality: Education in Iraq. International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM), IASFM12.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge university press.
- Saeed, N. R. (2015). *Problems of teaching English in Iraqi public schools in Mosul for the intermediate stage from the teachers' point of view* [Master's thesis, Middle East University]. <https://www.meu.edu.jo/library-2/>
- Serin, H. (2022). Challenges and opportunities of e-learning in secondary school in Iraq. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 9(3).
- Songbatumis, A. M. (2017). Challenges in teaching English faced by English teachers at MTsN Taliwang, Indonesia. *Journal of foreign language teaching and learning*, 2(2), 54-67.
- Taber, K. S. (2018). The use of Cronbach's Alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in Science Education*, 48(6), 1273–1296. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2>
- Weiqi, C. (2007). The structure of secondary school teacher job satisfaction and its relationship with attrition and work enthusiasm. *Chinese Education & Society*, 40(5), 17-31.
- Zainab, A. S., & Abdel Mehdi, A. T. (2015). Difficulties in the Empowerment of Iraqi Teachers of English through professional Development Activities. *Diyala Journal for Human Studies*, 1(67), 225-241.

Appendices

Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather insights into your experiences and perspectives as an English teacher, specifically focusing on challenges in teaching, classroom resources, facilities, and job satisfaction. Your responses will help us better understand the factors influencing English language teaching and improve educational practices.

Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. The information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study. Your personal details will not be shared with anyone outside the research team.

Section 1: Teacher Demographics

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
2. What grade do you teach?
 - 1st Intermediate classes
 - 2nd Intermediate classes
 - 3rd Intermediate classes
3. What is your age?
 - Under 25
 - 25–34
 - 35–44
 - 45–54
 - 55 and above
4. What is your highest level of education?

- Bachelor's Degree
 - Master's Degree
 - PhD
5. How many years have you been teaching English?
- Less than 1 year
 - 1–5 years
 - 6–10 years
 - More than 10 years

Section 2: Challenges in Teaching English

Please rate how significantly each of the following factors affects your ability to teach English effectively. (1 = Not at all, 2 = Slightly, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Significantly, 5 = Very Significantly)

1. The classrooms are overcrowded
2. Difficulty in giving individual attention to students
3. Student behavior issues caused by overcrowding
4. Pressure to teach to the test instead of focusing on communication skills
5. Limited student participation due to teacher-centered instruction
6. Lack of practical training in communicative teaching methods

Section 3: Classroom Materials and Facilities

Availability **of** **Materials**
How would you rate the availability and quality of the following resources at your school? (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Fair, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent)

1. English textbooks
2. Supplementary reading materials (e.g., storybooks, novels)
3. Audio-visual materials (CDs, videos, etc.)
4. Projectors and screens
5. Computers/language labs
6. Multimedia or interactive materials

Condition **of** **Facilities**
Please evaluate the following aspects of your school environment. (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Fair, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent)

1. Classroom size and seating arrangement
2. Lighting and ventilation in classrooms
3. Availability of heating in winter
4. Availability of cooling in summer
5. Condition of furniture (desks, chairs)
6. Cleanliness and sanitation facilities

Section 4: Teacher's Dissatisfaction and Job Discontent

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

1. I am satisfied with my current salary as an English teacher.
2. My income allows me to focus on my job without financial stress.
3. I feel respected and valued in my role as a teacher.
4. I have opportunities for professional growth and career advancement.
5. I feel motivated to try new teaching strategies.
6. I feel satisfied with my current working conditions.
7. My dissatisfaction with salary affects the way I teach.
8. I would leave the profession if a better-paid opportunity arose.