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Article

Investigating the Techniques Used in Teaching 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' of the Sixth Preparatory Textbook of English for Iraq

Hani M. Hadi[1] and Wi'am Majeed Mohammed[2]
[1]Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Babylon, Iraq, and [2]College of Agriculture, Al-Qasim Green University, Iraq
Correspondence: bas956.hani.maki@student.uobabylon.edu.iq

Abstract

The significance of teaching techniques lies in their role as the means for facilitating student learning and knowledge acquisition. Selecting optimal techniques is crucial for achieving instructional objectives and is influenced by numerous factors. This study investigates the techniques used for teaching 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' to sixth-preparatory students in Iraq and explores the rationale behind teachers' classroom practices. A mixed-method research design was employed, utilizing a structured observation checklist and semi-structured interviews. The study involved the systematic observation of ninety-five Iraqi English teachers from public schools in Al-Najaf, selected through stratified random sampling. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand their pedagogical reasoning. The findings revealed a predominance of traditional techniques, such as explicit grammar explanation in Arabic (88%), while communicative approaches like role-playing (12%) were rarely employed. Teacher interviews attributed this pattern to three systemic constraints: pressure from ministerial exams, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate training or resources. The results of this study can be used to develop teaching strategies and align curricula to bridge the gap between communicative teaching mandates and classroom realities. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges teachers face, thereby informing professional development and resource allocation.

Keywords: *Communicative Language Teaching, Grammar Instruction, Iraqi EFL Context, Pedagogical Techniques, Systemic Constraints.*

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Introduction

The widespread use of English has prompted many nations to prioritize it as a second or foreign language. Effective language instruction, however, should extend beyond preparing learners for exams; it must equip them to communicate meaningfully in real-world contexts (Ellis, 1997; Thornbury, 1999). Research underscores that neglecting grammar instruction often results in learners failing to achieve advanced communicative competence (Bygate & Tonkyn, 1994). While contemporary approaches emphasize integrating grammar into meaningful contexts, many educators rely on conventional methods (Thornbury, 1999).

In the Iraqi context, 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' is a curriculum component in Iraq's sixth preparatory English textbook. This component serves learners' immediate communicative purposes and facilitates interaction among speakers from the earliest stages of foreign language acquisition. Grammatical areas encompass foundational structural components such as tenses, verb forms, sentence structure, and word order. Functions, conversely, refer to the intentional use of language to achieve specific social or communicative goals, such as expressing opinions, giving advice, or making comparisons (Al-Mutawa & Kailani, 1989). Their significance lies in enabling students to master grammatical areas for accuracy and grammatical functions for effective communication.

'Grammatical Areas and Functions' are systematically introduced in the sixth preparatory textbook and constitute a significant part of the English class in Iraqi schools. This study is conducted because the teaching techniques for these areas within the Iraqi preparatory context have not received adequate attention from researchers. Brumfit and Johnson (1979) claimed that the central role of English teachers is to help students achieve the highest effectiveness in language use. Good teaching techniques should always aid individual pupils, considering their limitations, strengths, and areas of competency. Techniques vary in applicability, meaning a method suited to one context may be ineffective in another. Good teachers should not limit themselves to narrow techniques but rather vary their approaches based on what is best for students' learning. They should select the best techniques for particular students in specific situations and for teaching specific materials, regardless of the method they stem from (Allen, 1974).

Concerning 'Grammatical Areas and Functions,' Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) state that the best teaching technique is to present them through context-authentic utterances that clarify their meaning and use. Simulations and role-playing are now important for creating various social situations and relationships. A teacher's proficiency is determined by their success in using suitable techniques inside

the classroom and the extent to which students achieve mastery of grammatical areas and functions. This study aims to provide verifiable data-based answers to questions regarding the techniques used in teaching 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' and the rationale behind teachers' actual classroom practices.

The Aims of the Study

This study aims mainly at:

1. Identifying the techniques used in teaching 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' of the sixth preparatory English textbook for Iraq.
2. Exploring the rationale behind teachers' classroom practices in teaching the specified 'Grammatical Areas and Functions.'

The Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the identified gap in research concerning the teaching techniques for 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' within the Iraqi preparatory context. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, these techniques have not received adequate attention from researchers. Therefore, this study aims to provide verifiable data-based answers to crucial questions: What techniques are currently used in teaching 'Grammatical Areas and Functions'? Furthermore, what rationale is behind teachers' actual classroom practices in teaching these specified areas? The study seeks to enhance understanding of teacher proficiency in this specific domain by addressing these questions.

Review of Literature

Grammatical Areas are the structural rules of language, like verb tenses and sentence structure. In contrast, 'Grammatical Functions' are the communicative purposes these structures serve, such as making requests or expressing opinions (Thornbury, 1999). This distinction helps learners achieve both accuracy in form and fluency in communication.

Key grammatical areas include:

- Verb Forms and Tenses: These convey time and aspect, such as the present continuous for ongoing actions or the past perfect to sequence events (Swan, 2016).
- Sentence Structure: This covers word order and clause types, like conditional sentences that distinguish between real and hypothetical situations (Murphy, 2019).

- Morphology: This deals with word formation, including prefixes, suffixes, and irregular forms (Yule, 2010).
- Syntax: This governs how word order creates meaning, which is crucial for clarity (Parrott, 2010).

Grammatical functions apply these rules to achieve communicative goals, an approach rooted in the functional-notional syllabus (Wilkins, 1976). Common functions include:

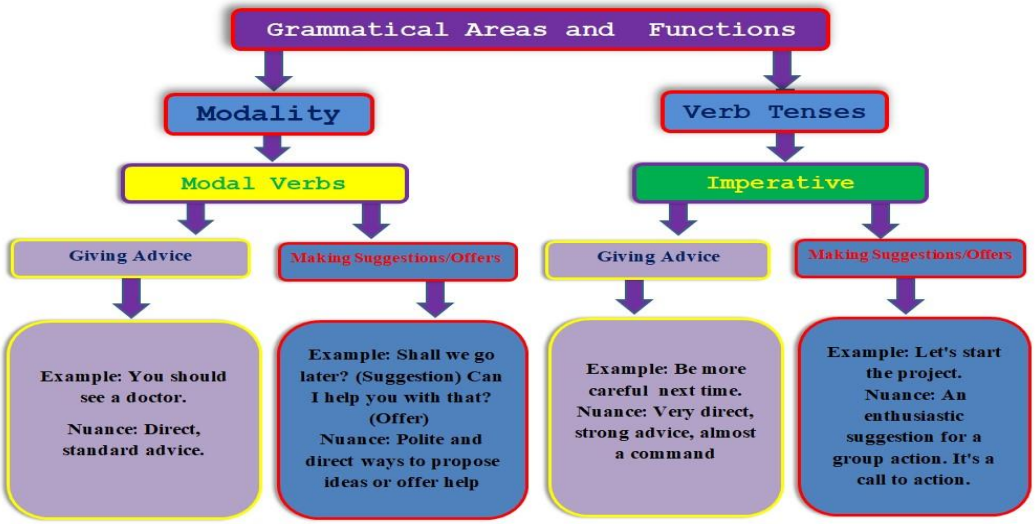
- Expressing Opinions: Using phrases like "I believe..." to state a viewpoint (Nunan, 2004).
- Giving Advice: Employing modal verbs like "should" to offer suggestions (Scrivener, 2005).
- Making Comparisons: Using comparative and superlative structures to analyze differences (Harmer, 2007).
- Narrating Events: Applying past tenses and temporal markers to build coherent stories (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Effective language teaching integrates these two components. For example, the grammatical area of modal verbs ("can," "must") serves the function of making requests or stating obligations (Hyland, 2004). Similarly, the present perfect tense is taught alongside its function of describing life experiences (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Teaching strategies that link form to function include task-based learning and notional-functional syllabi (Willis, 2007; Wilkins, 1976).

This integrated approach fosters critical thinking by helping learners understand how grammatical choices can affect meaning, such as using the passive voice to obscure agency (NCTE, 2008). It also strengthens literacy, as understanding syntactic structures improves reading comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). However, pedagogy must balance explicit instruction with contextual practice to avoid creating knowledge that learners cannot apply in real-world situations (Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

In conclusion, 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' are interdependent. Learners can use language with precision and purpose by understanding how structures are used for communication. As Larsen-Freeman (2003) stated, *"Grammar is not an end but a means for making meaning."*

Figure 2.1: Grammatical Areas and Functions



An Overview of Approaches and Methods of Grammar Teaching Techniques

This summary synthesizes the provided text on the hierarchical framework of approach, method, and technique in English language teaching, while maintaining the original citations.

In English language teaching, pedagogical practices are understood through a hierarchical framework consisting of approach, method, and technique (Anthony, 1963).

An approach represents the theoretical foundation of language instruction, based on principles of how language is learned. For instance, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that views interaction as both the means and the end goal of learning, drawing from Hymes' (1972) theory of communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Another example is the Natural Approach, which posits that language is acquired through comprehensible input in a low-stress setting (Krashen and Terrell, 1983).

A method is the practical plan that puts an approach into action. The Audiolingual Method, for example, operationalizes behaviorist principles through drills and habit formation (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Similarly, Total Physical Response (TPR) uses physical commands to aid comprehension and reduce anxiety (Asher, 1977) while the Silent Way emphasizes learner autonomy (Gattegno, 1972).

Techniques are the specific classroom activities used to implement a method. Examples include information-gap tasks that promote interaction, aligning with the CLT approach, or dictogloss exercises for listening and writing practice (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Techniques are considered adaptable tools,

such as role-plays or games, that teachers can modify to fit learner needs (Brown, 2007).

These three concepts are interrelated: an approach informs the choice of a method, which in turn determines the techniques used. For example, a teacher following the Communicative Language Teaching (approach) might use task-based language teaching (method) and then implement a specific collaborative activity (technique) to foster communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This framework allows educators to connect theoretical principles with practical classroom actions in a structured yet adaptable way.

The Importance of the Textbooks

The textbook is a central and indispensable tool in the teaching process, with its importance widely recognized by educators and institutions. Mutthaup (2003) describes textbooks as the instruments that convert general syllabus guidelines into concrete teaching materials, including topics, vocabulary, and grammar points for classroom use.

Multiple scholars further emphasize the significance of the textbook. Rivers (1977) asserts that the role of textbooks cannot be overstated, as they dictate the majority of classroom instruction and students' independent study. Similarly, Abbott et al. (1985) state that the textbook is the foundation for the entire course and the academic year's work for most teachers. This is why educational organizations invest heavily in developing and producing textbooks, particularly for the early school years.

Reflecting this importance, the Commonwealth Educational Committee provided specific recommendations for authors creating textbook content, as cited in Allen (1965). These guidelines include:

- Material should be selected based on the average learner's capacity, the teacher's efficiency, and the time available.
- Content should be informed by knowledge of the English language and local linguistic and social conditions.
- New structures should be practiced with familiar vocabulary, and new vocabulary should be introduced with familiar structures.
- The accompanying teacher's book must clearly identify new material in each lesson and analyze the vocabulary and structures taught.
- The language level of the teacher's book must be understandable to the teacher.
- Ideally, the material in a single textbook should be limited to what can be taught within one year.

An Overview of the Sixth Preparatory Textbook of English for Iraq

The textbook is designed for 6th-grade Preparatory students, considered young adults. Its content is tailored to their knowledge, world experience, and interests.

It has two primary objectives as the final book in a 12-year series. First, it offers clear and direct preparation for the final examination. Second, it continues the learning framework established in the previous books, which includes:

- Providing opportunities for students to expand their English knowledge and improve fluency.
- Encouraging students to develop study skills and become more independent learners.
- Using an analytical approach to grammar, helping students analyze language patterns through detailed examples.

The course content is designed to be relevant to students' real-world needs, focusing on two main areas:

- Life outside school: Preparing students for situations where they encounter English daily.
- Life after school: Equipping students for university studies or future careers.

Ultimately, the course emphasizes English as an international language, addressing the students' immediate academic requirements (short-term goals) and future (long-term) needs.

An Overview of the Sixth Preparatory Textbook of English for Iraq

The *"English for Iraq"* textbook for the 6th Preparatory year is designed for young adult learners. It aims to be relevant by covering topics related to their real-world experiences and future needs, such as life after school, university studies, and future careers.

As the final course in a 12-year cycle, it focuses on preparing students for their final examination while continuing the learning framework of previous books. This framework is built on three pillars:

- Expanding students' knowledge and fluency in English.
- Fostering independent learning and study skills.
- Promoting an analytical approach to grammar, where students analyze language patterns.

The course emphasizes English as an international language, balancing students' short-term exam goals with long-term communication needs.

The textbook package consists of four main components:

1. The Student's Book is the core component for presenting new language and developing skills. It contains various illustrated text types like articles, emails, and interviews. It also includes a "Grammar and Functions Reference" section and provides regular opportunities for speaking practice through discussions, pairwork, and role-plays.
2. Activity Book: This book provides consolidation and practice exercises for the material introduced in the Student's Book. It focuses on developing listening, reading, and writing skills and includes specific exam preparation tools like "examination tips" and "Test yourself" activities.
3. Audio: An essential part of the course, the audio component includes recorded discussions, dialogues, and monologues to model language and develop listening skills. However, the focus on listening is reduced in the 6th Preparatory course to align with the final exam requirements.
4. Teacher's Book: Prepared by the Ministry of Education, this book is a crucial guide for new and experienced teachers. It provides detailed, easy-to-follow lesson plans with clear aims, required materials, and approximate exercise timings. Each unit includes a language summary, a word list, and suggested teaching techniques based on the communicative approach.

The Adopted Approach in Teaching of the Sixth Preparatory Class

The *"English for Iraq, 6th Preparatory"* course is topic-based and follows a structured grammatical and functional syllabus, which revises and extends the grammatical knowledge students have previously acquired.

The course's primary methodology is the Communicative Approach, with the main goal being the development of students' communicative competence. It employs a variety of strategies within this framework. A key strategy, particularly emphasized at the secondary stage, is a more direct and overt analysis of language structure. This approach is adopted for two main reasons:

1. Cognitive Ability: Students at this age are cognitively mature enough to understand the concepts behind English grammar rules and how these rules help convey meaning. Therefore, studying structure is seen as an integral part of developing communicative competence, not separate from it.
2. Recycling and Retention: Analyzing how language is constructed provides an opportunity for students to revisit and recycle previously

learned language in a more academic manner, which aids in developing both accuracy and fluency. This discovery process helps students take ownership of their learning and makes the language more memorable.

The course also places a strong emphasis on developing independent learning. Students must build on their existing skills by completing homework, research, and revision independently. This development of self-study skills is encouraged in the classroom, with students working through activities independently before discussing and correcting their answers with a partner, a group, or the whole class as part of the learning process.

Four studies on English grammar teaching were reviewed:

1. Musigrungsi (2001): This study investigated English teachers' views on grammar in government secondary schools in Thailand. A mixed-method approach (survey, case studies) found that teachers viewed grammar as essential for academic writing but less for communication. Traditional teaching methods were standard, influenced by teachers' own learning experiences, and significant challenges included large class sizes and curriculum pressure.
2. Retriansyah (2013): This study identified grammar teaching techniques in Indonesian junior high schools. A descriptive qualitative design (observation, interviews) found that teachers used various techniques, with the deductive approach (rule explanation followed by examples) being the most dominant. Teachers chose techniques based on their perceived effectiveness, time efficiency, and alignment with the curriculum.
3. Boutrig & Khababa (2022): This study examined grammar teaching strategies in an Algerian high school. Using a mixed-methods design (interviews, observation, questionnaires), the study concluded that strategies significantly impacted students' comprehension and communication ability.
4. Nurbaiti, Yunita, Syahrial, & Gusman (2023): This study identified grammar teaching methods in a senior high school and analyzed student responses. Using a descriptive qualitative approach (observation, interviews), it found that teachers primarily used the deductive method and the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), and students responded positively to them.

Discussion on Previous Studies

The review of these four studies highlights several common themes. It informs the design of the *"present study,"* which focuses on teaching the 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' in the *"English for Iraq"* 6th Preparatory textbook.

- *Topic and Purpose*: All reviewed studies focus on exploring grammar teaching methods. The present study aligns with this by aiming to identify the techniques used for teaching 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' and to understand the rationale behind teachers' choices, similar to the goals of Musigrungsi (2001), Retriansyah (2013), and Boutrig & Khababa (2022).
- *Data Collection*: The previous studies often used a mix of qualitative tools like interviews and observations (Musigrungsi, 2001; Boutrig & Khababa, 2022; Nurbaiti, 2023) and quantitative tools like questionnaires (Musigrungsi, 2001; Boutrig & Khababa, 2022). The present study will also use an observation checklist and a semi-structured interview to gather broad and in-depth data.
- *Sample*: Previous studies focused primarily on English teachers, sometimes including students (Boutrig & Khababa, 2022). The present study will also focus on teachers, specifically those teaching the sixth preparatory grade in Al-Najaf schools.
- *Methodology*: All reviewed studies employed a descriptive research method. The present study will also adopt a descriptive method.
- *Data Analysis*: The previous studies used a combination of descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The present study will use frequencies, percentages, Cohen's Formula, and percentage agreement for its quantitative analysis, alongside thematic analysis for its qualitative data.

In essence, the present study builds upon the foundation of this prior research by applying similar methodologies to a new, specific context: the teaching of grammatical areas and functions within the Iraqi curriculum.

Methodology

Design of the Study

The study adopts a descriptive research design to investigate the techniques used for teaching 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' in the 6th Preparatory "English for Iraq" textbook.

The methodology consists of two main components:

- Observation Checklist: A structured observation checklist with a binary scale (used/unused) is the core tool for data collection. It contains 24 items developed from various sources, including related literature, the Iraqi EDUTV Channel, and pilot English lessons, to gather in-depth insights into the participants' practices. It is used to record real-time data on the specific techniques teachers employ in the classroom when teaching the grammatical areas and functions from the textbook.
- Semi-Structured Interviews: The study also uses semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to complement the observational data. The interviews are analyzed using descriptive thematic analysis. These questions draw from various sources, including related literature and pilot English lessons. These interviews explore the teachers' rationale and reasoning behind their classroom practices.

In essence, the study uses observation to identify what techniques are used and interviews to understand why they are used.

Methods of the Study

The study described adopts a mixed-methods approach. It will use quantitative methods (frequency counts, percentages) to analyze data from an observation checklist, and qualitative methods (contextual interpretations) from interviews to add pedagogical depth to the statistical findings. This dual approach is supported by Creswell (2009) as a rigorous way to address multifaceted research questions.

Participants

Participants in this study are English teachers of the sixth preparatory grade in Al-Najaf schools. From a target population 125, ninety-five Iraqi sixth-grade English teachers were selected from four distinct districts. Stephen Thompson's equation determined the sample size (Thompson, 2012). Additionally, a sub-sample of twenty

teachers was selected from the main study sample for interviews to elicit their rationale behind their actual practices.

Data Collection

Participants will be observed using an observation checklist. Subsequently, the researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews with them. The validity of the research instruments was established by a panel of fourteen EFL teaching experts, and their inter-rater reliability was confirmed through dual-observer agreement protocols.

Statistical Means

Various statistical means are used to achieve the aims of the study. They are as follows:

1. Percentage Agreement: It is used to calculate the validity of the instruments.
2. Cohen's Kappa Formula: It is a statistical measure used to evaluate the level of agreement between two raters, adjusting for the likelihood of chance agreement. It quantifies how much better the observed agreement is compared to what would be expected by random chance alone (Cohen, 1960). It has been used to determine the instruments' judgment reliability coefficient.

$$\kappa = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e}$$

Interpretation of Fleiss' Kappa (κ)	
Fleiss' Kappa (κ)	Agreement Level
< 0.00	Poor
0.00 – 0.20	Slight
0.21 – 0.40	Fair
0.41 – 0.60	Moderate
0.61 – 0.80	Substantial
0.81 – 1.00	Almost Perfect

1. Landis (1977)

3. Sample Size Calculation: Stephen Thompson's equation has been used to calculate the main sample size (Thompson, 2012).

Equation for Sample Size (Thompson's Formula)

The formula is typically presented as:

```
n = (N * P * (1 - P)) / (((N - 1) * d^2 / Z^2) + (P * (1 - P)))
```

Where: * `n`: Required sample size * `N`: Total population size * `P`: Estimated proportion of the population that possesses the attribute in question (e.g., prevalence of a characteristic). If unknown, 0.5 is often used for maximum sample size. * `Z`: Z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level (e.g., 1.96 for 95% confidence, 2.58 for 99% confidence). * `d`: Desired level of precision or margin of error (e.g., 0.05 for a 5% margin of error).

4. Frequencies and Percentages: These are used to identify the number of teachers' responses and their percentages.

Results

Based on an observation checklist, the study's findings reveal a distinct pattern in teachers' pedagogical choices. There is a clear preference for traditional, teacher-centered techniques over modern, communicative ones.

Most Frequently Used Techniques (Over 65% Usage)

The most popular techniques are rooted in the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the Audio-lingual Method (ALM). These methods prioritize explicit instruction, accuracy, and controlled practice.

1. Explicit Explanation in L1 (88%): The most dominant technique involves teachers explaining grammar rules in the students' native language, valued for its clarity and efficiency.
2. Immediate Error Correction (79%): Teachers frequently correct mistakes during drills to prevent the fossilization of errors and reinforce accuracy.
3. Fill-in-the-Blank Exercises (78%): These are popular for providing controlled practice on specific grammar points and are easy to create and assess.
4. Visual Aids (76%): A communicative technique that is highly used, leveraging pictures and charts to make abstract grammar concepts more concrete and engaging for visual learners.
5. Translation Exercises (72%): A classic GTM technique to check comprehension and reinforce understanding of structural differences between languages.

6. Comparing and Contrasting Grammar (72%): A communicative technique, recommended in the teacher's book, that helps students understand nuanced usage by analyzing grammar in different contexts.
7. Transformation Drills (69%): An ALM technique used to build grammatical "muscle memory" by having students repeatedly alter sentence structures (e.g., active to passive).
8. Teacher-Led Examples (68%): A foundational communicative technique where teachers provide clear, contextually appropriate examples of complex grammar.
9. Matching Exercises (65%): A practical GTM technique for reinforcing form-meaning connections in a low-pressure, visual format.

Least Frequently Used Techniques (Under 25% Usage)

In stark contrast, the least utilized techniques are those that promote student-centered, communicative, and interactive learning. These are often associated with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach.

10. Written Sentence Construction (23%): Requiring students to create their own sentences is used less, likely due to the time required for completion and grading.
11. Rewriting Sentences for Clarity (16%): An advanced communicative skill focused on style and nuance, less prioritized than basic accuracy.
12. Substitution Drills (15%): An ALM technique that is less favored now due to its mechanical and decontextualized nature.
13. Role-Play (12%): While highly motivating, it is used sparingly due to implementation challenges like classroom management and difficulty monitoring for accuracy.
14. Dialogue Memorization (9%): An ALM technique abandoned mainly in modern pedagogy for being uncommunicative and rote.
15. Collaborative Storytelling (7%): A highly communicative activity likely underused due to the challenges of managing group work and monitoring individual performance.
16. Interactive Games (6%): Despite being recommended, games are rarely used, possibly due to concerns about classroom control, time constraints, and a perception that they are not "serious learning."
17. Analyzing Texts to Create Rules (5%): A highly advanced and cognitively demanding inductive task that is likely too difficult for most general classes.

18. Mechanical Q&A Drills (4%): The least used technique, this rote audio-lingual drill is considered the most mechanical and least communicative form of practice.

The study reveals a significant gap between modern pedagogical recommendations and classroom practice. Teachers overwhelmingly rely on traditional, teacher-centered methods emphasizing explicit rule-giving and accuracy (GTM, ALM). Conversely, student-centered, communicative activities that foster fluency and interaction (CLT) are largely absent. It suggests that factors such as large class sizes, curriculum demands, and pressure from examinations may be significant barriers preventing the implementation of more communicative teaching approaches.

The results from semi-structured interviews with 20 EFL teachers in Al-Najaf, Iraq, were integrated with the specific questions that prompted their responses. The analysis revealed four major themes shaping their teaching of 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' in the 6th Preparatory grade.

Impact of Ministerial Exams and Assessment Pressure

A predominant theme was the profound influence of high-stakes ministerial examinations on teaching practices. Teachers' responses, prompted by questions about their overall experience, their view of the curriculum, the effectiveness of their methods, and the challenges they face, consistently pointed to exam pressure as a primary driver of their pedagogical choices.

When teachers were asked to describe their overall experience as EFL teachers in Question 1: *"Can you please describe your overall experience as an EFL teacher, and how many years have you specifically taught the Sixth Preparatory textbook of English for Iraq?")* Furthermore, their views on the curriculum in Question 2: *"How would you describe the English language curriculum for the sixth preparatory grade, particularly concerning the teaching of 'Grammatical Areas and Functions'?"* often framed their responses around the necessity of preparing students for ministerial examinations. Teacher 3 explained that their experience primarily involved *"preparing students for ministerial examinations, which has shaped my teaching approach towards more traditional, content-focused methods."*

It was particularly evident in responses to Question 6: *"Some approaches to grammar teaching emphasize direct explanation and traditional exercises. Do you favor these techniques? If so, why?"* Teacher 5 explained their preference by stating that traditional methods are *"efficient and effective in preparing students for the ministerial exams... a more practical choice for me."*

Answers to Question 10 reinforced this sentiment: *"Do you face any specific challenges when teaching 'Grammatical Areas and Functions'...? If so, what are the most*

prominent challenges (e.g., ministral exams, large class sizes, etc.)?" Teachers consistently cited ministerial exams as a top challenge. The pressure leads to a perceived conflict where students might gain a *"solid theoretical foundation"* but struggle with real-world application, a concern raised in response to Question 5: *"To what extent do you believe the techniques you use help students understand the 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' and apply them effectively in real-life contexts?"*

Challenges of Large Class Sizes and Classroom Management

Another significant challenge frequently cited was the pervasive issue of large class sizes, which teachers identified as a significant impediment to implementing interactive and student-centered methodologies. This theme emerged clearly from responses to questions about using communicative techniques.

The challenges were most directly expressed in answers to Question 7: *"Do you frequently use techniques that focus on applying 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' in real communicative contexts (e.g., role-plays, games, storytelling activities)? Furthermore, do you face any specific challenges when applying these communicative techniques in your class?"* Teacher 7 stated, *"I do not frequently use [these] techniques... The primary challenges include the large number of students in each class, which makes it difficult to manage group activities."*

This issue also shaped responses to Question 3: *"When teaching 'Grammatical Areas and Functions' from the sixth preparatory textbook, what techniques or activities do you usually prefer to use in your lessons?"* Teachers explained that due to *"large class sizes and the need to cover extensive material,"* they preferred more *"traditional, teacher-centered approaches."*

Preference for Traditional Teaching Methods and Limited Communicative Approaches

Despite awareness of communicative language teaching, the interviews revealed a strong, pragmatic preference for traditional methods. This pattern was evident in responses to questions about preferred techniques, typical lesson structures, and the rationale for using traditional approaches.

When asked to describe a typical lesson in Question 4: *"Can you describe a typical lesson where you teach a specific grammatical point...? What steps do you follow?",* teachers consistently detailed a traditional sequence: explicit explanation (often in Arabic), board work, and controlled practice from the textbook.

The reasoning behind this was articulated in response to Question 6: *"Some approaches to grammar teaching emphasize direct explanation and traditional exercises. Do you favor these techniques? If so, why?"* Teachers explained that they favor these methods

because they are *"efficient and effective,"* making them a *"practical choice"* given the constraints of their environment.

Lack of Resources and Support for Communicative Teaching

A final, consistent theme was the inadequacy of resources and support systems necessary to implement modern, communicative techniques. It was revealed in answers to questions about the official teacher's book and professional training.

When asked about the helpfulness of the official guide in Question 8: *"In your opinion, does the teacher's book recommended by the Ministry of Education adequately assist in teaching the textbook?"*, teachers noted that it *"often fails to provide detailed guidance on how to implement more communicative or interactive activities."*

Furthermore, when asked about professional development in Question 9: *"Have you participated in any training courses or workshops...? If so, how have these courses specifically improved your classroom practices?"*, teachers expressed frustration. Teacher 9 explained that while the courses were useful, *"the practical application in my classroom has been limited"* due to a *"lack of ongoing support or resources to implement these new techniques effectively."* It highlights a critical disconnect between training and the practical realities of the classroom.

Discussion of Related Results

The study's findings align with previous research in several key areas, confirming a widespread pattern in grammar instruction:

- *Dominance of Traditional Methods*: The study concurs with Musigrungsi (2001), Retriansyah (2013), and Nurbaiti (2023) that traditional, teacher-centered methods such as explicit rule explanation, immediate error correction, and the Grammar-Translation Method are dominant in the classroom.
- *Barriers to Communicative Teaching*: It corroborates the findings of Musigrungsi (2001) by identifying large class sizes and examination pressures as significant obstacles that prevent teachers from adopting more communicative, student-centered approaches.
- *Minimal Use of Communicative Activities*: The observation that communicative activities are rarely used mirrors the findings of Musigrungsi (2001), highlighting a persistent gap between modern pedagogical recommendations and actual classroom practice.

Despite these agreements, the study's findings also diverge from other research in three notable ways:

- *Impact of Traditional Methods*: While this study suggests that traditional methods undermine students' real-world communicative abilities, both Boutrig and Khababa (2022) and Nurbaiti (2023) found that similar grammar-focused strategies led to positive student responses and effective communication outcomes.
- *Variety of Techniques:* The current study describes a narrow range of techniques. It contrasts with Retriansyah (2013), who observed teachers using various methods, including inductive techniques, drills, and games, despite also finding a preference for the deductive approach.
- *Teacher Beliefs vs. Practice:* This study found a strong alignment between teachers' beliefs and traditional practices. It diverges from Musigrungsi (2001), who reported a more complex situation where teachers' views on grammar's role were varied and sometimes conflicted with their classroom actions, especially regarding communication.

Conclusions

The study reveals four main conclusions based on data from classroom observations and teacher interviews:

1. Dominance of Traditional Methods: Both observation and interview data confirm a firm reliance on traditional, teacher-centered teaching methods. Techniques like explicit grammar explanation in the students' native language and immediate error correction are the most common practices. It shows a focus on linguistic accuracy and direct instruction over communicative competence.
2. Gap Between Theory and Practice: While teachers know the value of communicative skills, the practical application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is minimal. Communicative activities such as interactive games, text analysis, and grammar-based Q&A are rarely used. This gap between recommended principles and classroom reality negatively affects students' ability to use English in real-life situations.
3. Systemic Barriers to Communicative Approaches: The study identifies three primary, deeply rooted factors that prevent the adoption of communicative methods:
    - High-Stakes Exams: The pressure of ministerial examinations, which test discrete language points, forces teachers to prioritize rote learning and grammar rules over communicative practice.

- Large Class Sizes: Overcrowded classrooms make it extremely difficult to manage interactive activities or provide individual student attention.
- Lack of Resources and Support: Teachers face a shortage of appropriate teaching materials, insufficient practical professional development, and unsupportive classroom environments.

4. Consistency Between Beliefs and Practices: The data show a high degree of consistency between what teachers say and what they do. Their preferred traditional methods and the challenges they describe align directly with the observed classroom practices. It suggests that teachers are not necessarily choosing these methods out of pure pedagogical belief, but are pragmatically adapting to systemic pressures and constraints.

The research concludes that the current teaching environment creates a self-reinforcing cycle. External pressures like exams and large classes necessitate the use of traditional methods, and this reliance is further solidified by a lack of resources and support for more communicative alternatives. This cycle presents a significant challenge to developing genuine communicative competence in students.

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