

الصعوبات التي يواجهها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من الأكراد في الأنشطة التفاعلية داخل الفصل الدراسي

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كيفية اقتباس البحث

عودل ، أرخوان فتاح، إيمان مريوان حمه، هيلن بشتيوان حمه، الصعوبات التي يواجهها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من الأكراد في الأنشطة التفاعلية داخل الفصل الدراسي، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، آب 2026، المجلد: 16، العدد: 8.

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Understanding the Difficulties Kurdish EFL Learners Face in Interactive Classroom Activities

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المخلص

استكشفت هذه الدراسة المُشكلات التي واجهها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) من الأكراد خلال الأنشطة التفاعلية في الفصول الدراسية بجامعة جرمو في إقليم كردستان العراق. وتتمثل أهداف الدراسة في تحديد الصعوبات الشائعة التي يواجهها المتعلمون أثناء الأنشطة التفاعلية، والعوامل ذات الصلة التي تسبب هذه الصعوبات، وتحديد السبل الممكنة لتعزيز مشاركة المتعلمين وكفاءتهم التواصلية خلال الأنشطة التفاعلية. اعتمدت الدراسة نهجاً مختلطاً، حيث تم استخدام استبيان شمل 104 طلاب جامعيين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، ومقابلة شبه منظمة مع 8 طلاب. وفي حين تم تحليل البيانات الكمية باستخدام التكرارات والنسب المئوية والمتوسطات، تم تحليل البيانات النوعية من خلال الترميز الموضوعي.

وكانت المشكلات المتعلقة باللغة، مثل المفردات والمشكلات النحوية والنطق، إلى جانب الحواجز النفسية مثل القلق عند التحدث والخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء والخلل وانعدام الثقة، من بين التحديات التي واجهها الطلاب. كما لوحظت صعوبات متعلقة بالفصل الدراسي، مثل الممارسات التي تركز على المعلم، وكبر حجم الفصول الدراسية، وعدم المساواة في المشاركة في الأنشطة الجماعية. وكشفت النتائج أنه على الرغم من مواجهة هذه التحديات، كان لدى المتعلمين مواقف إيجابية تجاه هذه الأنشطة، وكانوا يعتقدون أن هذه الأنشطة لا تعزز الدافع فحسب، بل تطور أيضاً مهاراتهم في التحدث. وشجعت الدراسة على استخدام منهجية التعلم اللغوي (CLT) والنهج الذي يركز على المتعلم في بيئة التعلم.

Abstract

This study explored the problems that Kurdish EFL learners faced during interactive classroom activities at Charmo University in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The aims of the study were to identify the common difficulties which learners face during interactive activities, relevant factors causing such difficulties, and identify possible ways of assisting learners' participation and communicative competence during interactive activities. The study used a mixed-method approach, using a questionnaire for 104 undergraduate EFL students and a semi-structured interview with 8 students. While quantitative data were analysed through the use of frequencies, percentages, and means, qualitative data were analysed through thematic coding. Language related problems such as vocabulary, grammatical problems, and pronunciation along with psychological barriers such as anxiousness when speaking, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and lack of confidence were amongst the challenges faced by students. Classroom related difficulties such as teacher-centred practices, large classroom sizes, and unequal participation in group activities were also noted. The findings revealed that despite facing such challenges, the learners had positive attitudes towards such activities and believed that such activities not only enhanced motivation but also developed their speaking skills. The study encouraged the use of CLT and the learner-centred approach in the learning environment.

1 Introduction

Classroom interaction has been regarded as a crucial aspect of EFL learning, which is an essential part of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. In this approach meaningful communication takes place and learners actively participate in classroom activities





through authentic use of language rather than just gaining grammatical knowledge [1], [2]. Interaction is an essential aspect of second language acquisition as it provides opportunities for learners to acquire speaking skills, negotiate meaning and develop communicative competence through tasks like pair work, group discussions and role-play [3]. Nonetheless, it remains challenging for many EFL learners to engage in interactive classroom activities because of the inability to understand English vocabulary, language anxiety and lack of confidence when performing oral communication in class with contextual factors such as teacher-centred instruction, large class sizes and limited student opportunities for communicative practices [4],[5]. These challenges are especially clear in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where English is taught at all educational levels but traditional, grammar-focused approaches dominate classroom English teaching and often limit learners' opportunities to engage in situations where they can exhibit productive classroom interaction and develop speaking abilities [6]. To this end, the present study explores the problems of Kurdish EFL learners in pair and group work, examines causative factors and offers some feasible solutions for improving learner engagement and communicative competence. To be specific, this study looks into the following questions:

- (1) What are the key challenges Kurdish EFL students face in interactive classroom practices
- (2) What are the reasons for these difficulties? And
- (3) What strategies do learners recommend to increase engagement in interactive classroom activities?

1.1 Significance of the Study

This study is important because it will provide insight into some of the challenges Kurdish EFL students face in participating in interactive activities in the classroom and affecting their communicative competence. Furthermore, interaction has been reported to facilitate second language acquisition and promote students' communicative competence [3].

Based on this study findings, teachers will be able to recognize factors preventing students from participating in classroom activities and will try to implement more effective approaches and techniques to establish better communication in class. For example, teachers can work on students' speaking anxiety, low confidence, and lack of chances to communicate with their classmates [4],[7].

2. Literature review

This section presents an overview of previous studies on classroom interaction, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and the

linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors impacting Kurdish EFL learners' engagement in classroom interaction tasks identifying gaps the current study filled.

2.1 Interactive Classroom Activities in EFL Learning

Interactive activities provided during lessons can make the students interact with one another to learn how to speak a language. Students can be provided with activities such as pair work, group work discussions, role plays and presentations. During these activities students get to practice how to speak by using the language provided to them during lessons. During interaction students negotiate meaning by exchanging ideas [2]. Through activities students can acquire language.

Interaction can be regarded as an important consideration in language teaching and learning. Researcher[1] argues that students gain language proficiency faster through active language use than through passive reception of information from the teacher. When students are allowed to interact, they can receive input, produce output and get feedback.

Students must be willing to take part in activities during lessons in order for them to benefit from them. Unfortunately, many students in EFL classrooms are very passive due to numerous factors.

2.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Interaction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is one of the approaches that gives priority to communication as the primary function of language learning and teaching. It aims at developing students' communicative competence through their ability to know when and how to say what to whom. CLT encourages student-centeredness, interaction, and real communication [2].

Studies found out that CLT approaches help students improve their speaking skills and overall communicative competence when practiced correctly. [8] for instance, stated that teachers can increase students' vocabulary through communicative approaches by combining it with learning all four language skills. [9] conducted a study that found CLT activities which were both interactive and technology-based improved the students' speaking skills and confidence.

However, the EFL context of Kurdistan Region like many other contexts does not usually benefit from CLT due to some institutional and pedagogical limitations. Teachers tend to use the traditional method of teaching which is teacher-centred and limits students' interaction.





2.3 Linguistic Barriers to Participation

Linguistic challenges are considered one of the main obstacles to students' engagement in interactive activities. EFL students may often face problems in various linguistic areas such as limited vocabulary or poor grammar skills along with pronunciation problems that prevent them from conveying their ideas clearly.

[7] argue that inadequate vocabulary of students negatively impacts their participation in discussions and inability to deliver their messages successfully. Furthermore, [6] claim that Kurdish EFL students demonstrate speaking difficulties caused by limited vocabulary and grammar mistakes.

Researches on writing issues conducted on Kurdish students [10], [11] have concluded that linguistic constraints such as weakness in grammar and vocabulary lead to unsuccessful writing attempts which may also relate to the students' speaking skills.

2.4 Psychological Factors Affecting Interaction

Factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low confidence levels affect students' desire to engage in communicative activities. Speaking anxiety is quite prevalent among students in EFL settings where students fear being negatively judged by teachers and classmates.

The study by [4] suggests that speaking anxiety lowers participation rates among students, prompting them to avoid interactions. [7] also revealed that students' fear of making mistakes and low confidence were key reasons students avoided speaking.

The study by [6] highlights that Kurdish students' reluctance to join group work and discussions is linked to feelings of embarrassment and a fear of being criticized. Anxiety in writing studies [11] also found that affective factors contribute to students' avoidance to participate in all four skills.

2.5 Classroom Context and Environmental Factors

Classroom related factors also affect students' participation in interaction. These include class size, teaching practices, classroom atmosphere, and lack of resources.

When it comes to English as a foreign language classrooms, a prevalent characteristic of classrooms is their considerable size. Researchers found that overcrowded classrooms result in fewer chances to interact and get teacher feedback and cause student passivity [5]. According to [12], a lack of student interaction and poor classroom settings proved detrimental to student involvement, especially for students in distance education and large classes.

According to [13], teacher-dominated discussions significantly reduce students' chances to participate actively through speaking. [14] reported that Iraqi Kurdistan EFL contexts are still affected by teacher-centred methods such as skill drills and memorization.

2.6 Group Work and Collaborative Learning Challenges

Group work and pair work are integral aspects of language learning as interactive classroom activities. Nevertheless, these practices are not free of problems since learning in groups may be accompanied by unequal participation and imposition of ideas by some students. Students may also disagree with each other and conflict may occur.

Research has revealed that while learning in groups some students tend to take over group discussion and decision making while others remain silent [15]. Research findings on collaborative learning show that learning collaboratively can become less productive when faced with challenges such as mixed proficiency levels and unwillingness to cooperate with others.

Students in Kurdish EFL classrooms may encounter problems when asked to participate in group work and pair work activities due to uneven proficiency levels, lack of confidence and inadequate experience in interactional strategies used in collaborative learning [16].

2.7 Cultural and Contextual Influences

Cultural factors can also impact students' willingness to engage in interactive activities. For instance, students from certain cultures may feel that speaking up in class is disrespectful to the teacher. This belief can prevent students from interacting in class.

A research [17] found that increasing cultural awareness in EFL classrooms can enhance students' communicative competence. The researchers determined that students who lacked cultural awareness were less likely to behave appropriately when interacting.

Lastly, students' beliefs about language learning impact their behavior. The study by [18] discovered that Kurdish EFL students valued grammar rules and memorization over communication.

2.8 Empirical Studies in Kurdish EFL Context

A study conducted by [6] suggested that psychological issues such as nervousness and lack of confidence along with linguistic challenges like limited vocabulary affect Kurdish EFL students' speaking skills. [12] reported that Kurdish EFL students experience decreased interaction and lack of motivation during online learning classes.





Based on [13] analysis of classroom discourse, it is suggested that Kurdish EFL students do not engage actively in communication, and classroom activities are primarily teacher-centred. Furthermore, [19] explored the impact of student-centred methods, finding that transitioning to interactive instruction yielded enhanced communicative skills.

To sum up, the evidences suggest that Kurdish EFL students experience numerous obstacles that result in diminished involvement in interactive activities.

3 Methodology

This section outlines the research method of this study. Research design, participants, instruments, data collection, and data analysis procedures are addressed. This study employed a mixed-method approach to determine what challenges Kurdish EFL learners faced during interactive activities conducted in classroom.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts mixed-method methodology since both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used. Quantitative methods are used when questionnaires were administered whereas qualitative methods are employed when semi-structured interviews were conducted.

With this type of research design, triangulation can be applied. Validity and reliability of the results can be increased since numerical data obtained from the survey and detailed description gathered from the respondents' explanations are both combined in the analysis. Questionnaires will be able to point out common trends of difficulties while interviews will be able to explain learners' perceptions and solutions.

3.2 Participants

The study involved undergraduate English major students of Charmo University as the participants. A total of 104 Students answered the questionnaire while 8 participated in the interview. The participants were recruited through convenience sampling since they were easily approachable by the researchers. The participants had prior exposure to activities like group work, pair work, and discussions that involved interaction thus were eligible to participate.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

The study used two data collection tools for gathering quantitative and qualitative data, including a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. [20] as well as [21] argue that quantitative and qualitative tools should be

used together in modern education research because they help collect numerical data as well as obtain participants' experiences and thoughts.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process included two stages: Questionnaire administration and Semi-structured interviews. Employing more than one data collection method increased trustworthiness by providing qualitative and quantitative data from research participants [20].

Questionnaires were distributed online and on paper so that students could complete them electronically or manually. The online questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms links, while hardcopies were distributed to some students during regular class meetings. Before distributing the questionnaire, students were briefed about the purpose and importance of the study and were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and would only be used for academic purposes. Students were allowed to take their time to complete the questionnaire voluntarily. The questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data about students' perceptions of and struggles with interactive classroom activities. Questionnaires are often thought to be an effective way to collect data from a moderately large audience in a short amount of time, especially when offering both electronic and physical options [21].

Stage two consisted of semi-structured interviews with a small subset of students who were willing participants for the qualitative portion of the study. Students who were willing and able to dedicate time beyond completing the questionnaire were invited to participate. Interviews were completed individually either in person or virtually and took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Interviews were audio-recorded (with permission) and transcribed for further thematic analysis. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to obtain students' opinions while also diving deeper on specific topics that pertain to the research study [22].

Classroom observation was not implemented due to time constraints. Questionnaire data and interview data were deemed adequate in both scope and depth to complete the study and practice methodological triangulation [20].

3.5 Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis were conducted on the data collected from the participants to address the research problem holistically. Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to data analysis allowed the researchers to generalize some of the findings and uncover participants' experiences and perceptions on a deeper level [20].

3.6 Ethical Considerations





All ethical considerations were taken during the research process. All respondents participated voluntarily, and the purposes and goals of this study were explained to them before the survey. The respondents were ensured that their responses would be kept confidential, anonymous, and used for academic purposes only. The respondents also had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any given point. Ethical considerations were carried out to maintain the trustworthiness, integrity, and credibility of educational research [23].

4 Data analysis and Results

Data analysis of the survey questionnaires and interviews and the results of the analysis of the three research questions are presented in this section.

4.1 Results Related to Research Question One

What are the main difficulties Kurdish EFL students encounter in interactive classroom activities?

After collecting and analysing data, it was found that Kurdish EFL students face various problems while doing interactive activities in class. These problems were grouped into three main categories which are: linguistic difficulties, psychological barriers and participation problems.

4.1.1 Linguistic Difficulties

Students reported linguistic difficulties as one of the primary barriers that impeded their ability to actively engage in class discussions. In particular, respondents noted issues with vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and overall ability to share ideas in English.

Take for instance, the statement “I find it difficult to express my ideas in English during group discussions.” Students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Conversely, students disagreed or strongly disagreed 46.1% of the time. This question had a mean value of 3.46.

Likewise, students reported being afraid of making grammatical errors when speaking English. Around 42.3% of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Meanwhile, 30.8% of students opted for the neutral response. This question had a mean score of 3.62.

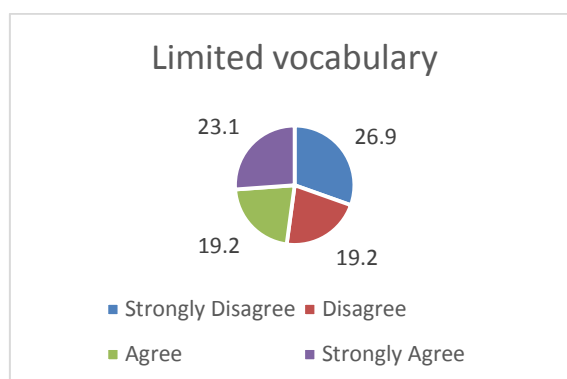


Figure 1: Statement 6 result (Limited vocabulary prevents me from speaking confidently in class).

Figure 1: The result of the sixth statement shows that limited vocabulary was another challenge students faced when communicating in English. Students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Limited vocabulary prevents me from speaking confidently in class” 34.6% of the time. Students were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with 46.1%. This question had a mean of 2.73.

Language pronunciation problems also negatively affected classroom communication. For this item, the results showed that 30.8% agreed that pronunciation issues affect classroom participation, and 26.9% disagreed. This questionnaire item had a mean of 3.15.

The interview results clearly agreed with the results of the questionnaire. Some students responded that they do not want to talk because they cannot think of the right words. Others are afraid of making grammar mistakes. Some students answered that they lose track of communication when they take too much time thinking about whether or not to use correct sentences.

The results support the findings of [17] who found that students’ limited vocabulary and grammatical anxiety greatly reduced communication confidence. [6] also found that Kurdish EFL students faced problems when speaking due to vocabulary restrictions and grammar weaknesses.

4.1.2 Psychological Difficulties

Results also showed that students’ psychological factors hinder them from participating during interactive tasks in class. Students frequently responded with fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, nervousness, and shyness.

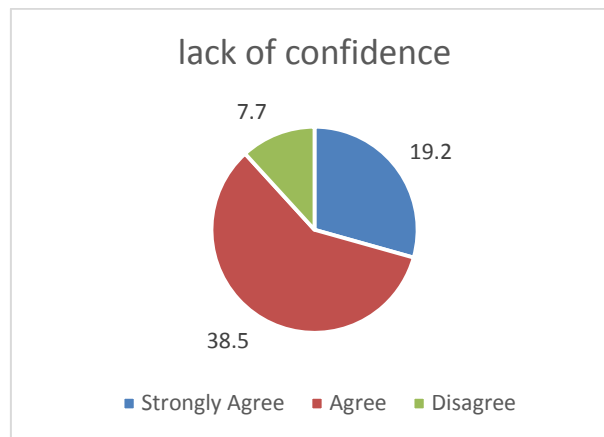


Figure 2: Statement 12 result (Lack of confidence prevents me from participating actively).

Figure 2: In the above, it shows that students were in agreement with the statement "Lack of confidence prevents me from participating actively" with 57.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Meanwhile, only 7.7% of students disagreed with this statement. This item got a relatively high mean value of 3.69. This means confidence heavily plays a role in this factor.

Students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I feel nervous when I make mistakes during interactive activities" with 46.2%. This item has an agreeable mean value of 2.96, showing students are somewhat nervous.

As for anxiety when speaking, 15.4% of students agreed they feel anxious when teachers ask students to speak English. 38.5% of students strongly disagreed. This resulted in a mean of 2.27 showing that students do have anxiety when speaking English but not all of the participants experience this.

Shyness was revealed as another factor hindering participation. The item "I feel shy when speaking English in front of my classmates" yielded a mean score of 2.50. Despite most students disagreeing with the statement, there was still a significant number who claimed to feel shy when interacting. Insights from interviews uncovered reasons for students' shyness. Many students felt embarrassed when speaking English due to fears of classmates judging them or thinking badly of them. Some students claimed that they would rather not speak at all during communication activities than make mistakes.

This supported [4] view that speaking anxiety and fear of classmates' negative evaluation decrease students' willingness to communicate in EFL contexts. [7] also mentioned fear of making mistakes and students' lack of confidence as factors hindering speaking participation.



4.1.3 Limited Participation During Interactive Activities

The survey results have shown that students faced difficulty with participation during pair work and group discussion. Although students understand the value of interaction, many were still struggling with participating during this activity. 34.6% agreed with the statement “I actively participate in pair work activities”, and 30.8% disagreed with the statement. This question had a mean of 3.42.

Similarly, students reported similar statistics for group discussions. The question “I participate in group discussions” had a mean of 3.46. While 34.6% agreed they participate in group discussions, 34.6% disagreed.

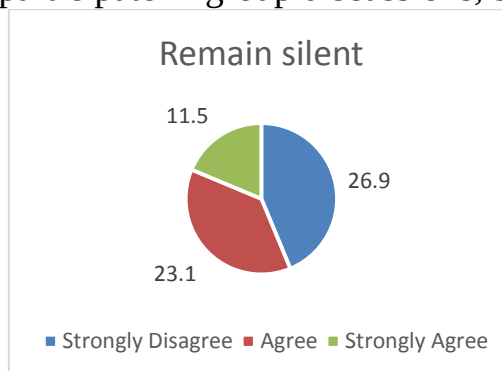


Figure 3: Statement 20 result (I often remain silent during interactive classroom activities).

Figure 3: The result of the twentieth statement, “I often remain silent during interactive classroom activities” had an average rating of 2.73. While 26.9% strongly disagreed, 34.6% agreed or strongly agreed, it still appears that a lack of talking when asked to interact can be a problem. Interviewees suggested that unequal participation happens during group work when students who are better at English or more confident take charge of the conversation. Students who lack confidence fear participating.

This result agrees with [15], who stated that unequal participation during group work caused problems with students’ motivation.

4.2 Results Related to Research Question Two

What factors contribute to these difficulties?

Results indicated that these difficulties resulted from teaching-related factors, contextual factors, and student-dependent factors.

4.2.1 Teacher-Centred Instruction and Grammar-Translation Approach

One of the most significant findings of the current study concerns teacher-centred instruction and an overt focus on grammar.

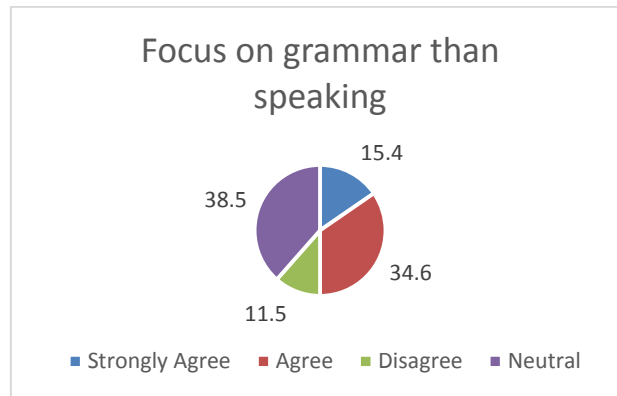


Figure 4: Statement 16 result (My teachers focus more on grammar than on speaking activities).

Figure 4: The result of the sixteenth statement received one of the highest mean ratings ($M = 4.08$). Around 50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement suggesting that grammar-based instruction is prevalent in Kurdish EFL classrooms. Likewise, “My English classes are mostly teacher-centred” had a mean score of 3.15. Approximately 30.8% agreed with this statement while 42.3% opted for the neutral choice.

The interview results confirmed this. Many students claimed that classroom teaching is limited to explaining grammar rules, translation, and written exercises rather than practicing communication. Some students also mentioned that teachers take up most of the classroom conversation time, giving students few chances to speak.

The results align with [14] who stated that Kurdish EFL classrooms are still teacher-centred and rely on grammar-based instruction.

4.2.2 Classroom Environment and Large Class Size

The results also indicated that the classroom environment affected participation.

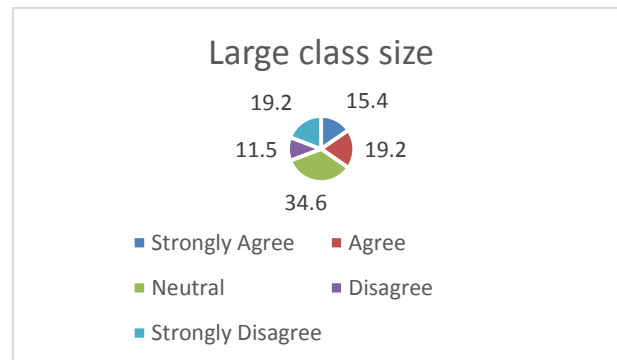


Figure 5: Statement 15 result (Large class size makes interaction difficult).

Figure 5: The result of the fifteenth statement received a moderately high mean value of 3.77. Agree or strongly agree (34.6%) were selected for this statement. What the interviewees conveyed was that with a large number of students, speaking chances are reduced as teachers find it hard to pay attention to every single person.

This supports the study by [5], who stated that large classes impact interaction opportunities and contribute to students being passive in EFL classrooms.

4.2.3 Students' Attitudes Towards Interaction

The data showed that students were positively inclined towards interaction, even with its associated struggles.

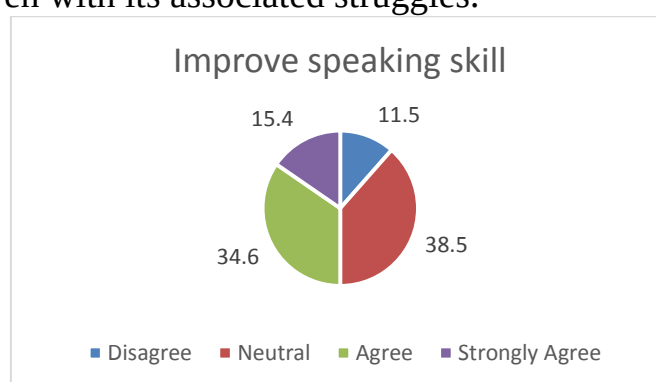


Figure 6: Statement 2 result (Interactive activities help me improve my speaking skills).

Figure 6: The result of the second statement had one of the highest mean scores ($M = 4.08$). About 50% of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. "I feel more motivated when lessons involve interactive activities" had a mean score of 3.81.

Overall, students understand the importance of learning by communicating with their peers and they are generally motivated to engage in interactive activities.

These results are consistent with those of [9], who found that students who engaged in communicative and interactive activities tended to become more confident and motivated speakers.

4.3 Results Related to Research Question Three

How can teachers help students overcome these challenges?

The results revealed several strategies that could boost students' engagement in interactive classroom activities.

Interviewees highlighted the value of nurturing classroom environments where errors can be seen as part of the learning process. Participants noted that teachers should provide positive reinforcement for accurate answers to enhance student confidence.



Further suggestions from the students involved pair and group work, and simulated conversations. They thought this would allow for more practice exchanging ideas with others which would help them become more fluent and less nervous. A further point is that teachers should allow students to speak without feeling overly scrutinized. Students conveyed that fewer interruptions during speaking would make them more open to communicating.

The results correspond with the CLT methods introduced in Chapters One and Two. [2] stated that through meaningful communication and practicing authentic communications skills, students acquire communicative competence. [1] also stated that students acquire better speaking skills by practicing communication.

Findings from this study suggest that Kurdish EFL students encounter multiple, often overlapping difficulties during interactive activities that influence their ability and willingness to participate and perform communicatively in these activities. These challenges include language-related problems (limited vocabulary and grammatical issues), psychological factors (fear and lack of confidence), and classroom/environmental constraints (large class sizes, teacher-dominated instruction). Despite generally positive attitudes towards interactive activities and acknowledgment of their value for speaking practice, communicative methods are not widely employed in Kurdish EFL classrooms. The combination of questionnaire and interview data enriched the study by providing both quantitative and qualitative perspectives on students' experiences, highlighting the importance of creating supportive, communicative, and student-centred classroom environments that foster active participation and meaningful language use.

5 Discussion

In this section, findings of the study will be discussed in relation to the research questions and their connection to the previous studies in literature section that are conducted on the related fields to interactive classroom teaching and activities.

This study was conducted to determine what difficulties Kurdish EFL students faced during interactive classroom activities, find causative factors underlying those difficulties, and discover ways to assist students to enhance their participation in communicative classroom interaction. The study demonstrated that students faced multi-dimensional difficulties regarding linguistic competence, psychological barriers, instructional practices and classroom conditions.



5.1 Linguistic Difficulties and Participation in Communication

One important finding was that linguistic difficulties impact students' participation in communicative activities. The findings of the questionnaire revealed that students have difficulty communicating their ideas in English when they take part in discussions or interactive speaking activities. Fear of making grammatical errors also obtained a moderately high mean score ($M = 3.62$). Vocabulary limitations and problems with pronunciation were other factors that negatively impacted students' participation.

The interview data revealed similar results since many students stated that they do not speak because they are not sure if they are pronouncing words correctly or using the correct grammar or vocabulary. Other students mentioned that they spend too much time thinking about whether their sentences are correct before they start speaking, which decreases fluency and communicative confidence.

[7] found similar results where students with limited vocabulary and anxiety over grammatical mistakes were not confident when speaking and unwilling to communicate. [6] also discovered that Kurdish EFL students face numerous problems when speaking English due to limited vocabulary and grammatical difficulties.

The findings support the notion that communicative competence is not only about having knowledge of grammar but also about being able to communicate when placed in a real communication situation [2]. If students do not possess enough linguistic competence to understand and communicate their messages, it will be difficult for them to participate in communication even if they have positive attitudes toward communicating.

The results of this study support [3] interaction hypothesis. The interaction hypothesis claims that students acquire language when they engage in meaningful communication and negotiation for meaning. If students avoid communicating with their peers due to linguistic mistakes, they lose the chance to acquire language.

5.2 Psychological Barriers and Speaking Anxiety

The quantitative findings revealed that lack of confidence scored one of the highest mean scores $M = 3.69$ suggesting that confidence is among the biggest challenges students face. Several students admitted to experiencing nervousness while participating in communication activities and fear of making mistakes while speaking English. Nonetheless, some students claimed to experience speaking anxiety whereas others scored moderate or relatively low scores in anxiety levels. The results show that speaking anxiety might be situational and may differ from one student to



another depending on factors such as classroom atmosphere, teacher attitude, peer reactions and previous experience.

The interview data further validated these barriers as several participants stated that they feel embarrassed to speak English for fear of being judged or laughed at by their classmates. Some students said they would rather keep quiet than speak and make mistakes. These results are consistent with [4], who noted that fear of speaking and being negatively evaluated by others caused students to lower their willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms. [7] also revealed that students' low confidence and fear of making mistakes in speaking English were some of the biggest contributors to speaking anxiety.

These findings further support [24] affective filter hypothesis which proposes that learning can be impacted by emotional barriers. When students experience high levels of anxiety, they tend to avoid interaction thus limiting their ability to practice the target language.

5. 3 Teacher-Centred Instruction and Classroom Practices

The study's findings also pointed to teacher-centred instruction and grammar translation activities as contributing factors to students' hesitations in participating during class. The quantitative data revealed that the grammar translation approach had one of the highest mean scores ($M = 4.08$), with most of the participants indicating that their English lessons were more grammar-centred than speaking-centred.

This finding was strongly supported by interview data where multiple students stated that classroom practices mostly involve explanation of grammar rules, translation, and written drills, rather than communication-building activities. Participants also noted that teachers take most of the floor in classroom interactions.

The study by [14] reported similar outcomes in their research, noting that the grammar translation approach continues to dominate Kurdish EFL classrooms, even as CLT gains traction. Similarly, [13] found classroom discourse to be teacher-centred in Kurdish EFL contexts. This suggests a divergence between the theoretical underpinnings and the practical application. [2] states that CLT classrooms should promote student-centred communication, collaboration among students, and interactions rooted in authenticity. Contrary to this principle, the current study suggests that Kurdish EFL classrooms continue to rely on teacher-centred approaches.

Lastly, results showed that too much correction during speaking activities has adverse impacts on students' confidence. Multiple participants stated that constant interruption and correction make them less likely to open up. This is in alignment with [1] argument that communicative

classrooms should provide students with a safe environment for speaking practices so they can build fluency.

5. 4 Classroom Conditions and Participation Difficulties

The study results further showed that classroom conditions have an effect on students' participation. Earlier findings showed a fairly high mean score of 3.77 for large class size. This finding shows that overcrowded classes diminish students' chances of interacting and participating.

Respondents noted that when class size is large teachers cannot give everyone an equal chance to speak. Another group of participants noted that noisy classrooms impair concentration thus discouraging students from participating actively in classroom discussions and group work activities.

These results corroborate findings by [5], who demonstrated that large classes harm classroom interaction, students' engagement, and participation in EFL classrooms. In another study, [12] found that classroom settings and lack of opportunities to communicate peers lower students' motivation and classroom interaction in Kurdish EFL classrooms.

Another considerable challenge noted in the findings was uneven participation. While some students valued pair work and classroom discussions, not all participated equally. Some students noted that confident students tend to dominate classroom discussions leaving the weak students excluded. Consistent with these results, [15] also highlighted that disparities in participation during collaborative learning can seriously impair students' confidence, motivation, and their ability to communicate.

5. 5 Students' Positive Attitudes Toward Interactive Learning

Although students faced various challenges as identified in this study, the results also illustrated that students develop positive attitudes toward doing interactive activities inside the classroom. The questionnaire results indicated that interactive activities help students improve speaking skills ($M=4.08$) and enhance students' motivation ($M=3.81$).

Interview results also indicated that students like to do pair work, group discussion, and communicative activities when supportive environments are created. Some participants noted that communicative activities allow them to practice speaking confidently and more fluently.

These results are consistent with [9] study which claimed that interactive and communicative activities inside the classroom have a positive impact on students' motivation, speaking confidence, and communicative competence. [25] also stated that student-centred classrooms promoted students' participation and communication skills among EFL students.





Consequently, we can conclude that Kurdish EFL students view communicative language learning favourably and are keen to join in when properly supported and given opportunities.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the problems Kurdish EFL students face during interactive activities in the classroom context of Charmo University. The results of this study have shown that students face a range of complex and interrelated problems including language constraints, psychological blocks, teaching methods, and classroom factors.

The results indicated that students' limited vocabulary range, fear of making grammatical errors, pronunciation problems, nervousness, and low confidence level lower their participation levels in communicative activities. Moreover, teacher talk, grammar translation approach, overcrowded classrooms, and unequal turn-taking frequency further decrease students' interaction in classrooms. On the other hand, this study showed that students have a positive view towards interaction in classroom activities and they believe interaction facilitates speaking skills and helps them become more communicatively competent.

In conclusion, findings suggest there is room for improvement when considering how communicative and student-centred approaches can be further encouraged in Kurdish EFL classrooms.

7 Pedagogical Suggestions

Based on the findings of the current study, several pedagogical suggestions can be offered for Kurdish EFL contexts. The initial suggestion is for instructors to direct their efforts towards enhancing students' communicative competence rather than solely drilling grammatical accuracy. Instructors can employ more communicative activities such as pair work, group work, discussion, role-play, and cooperative tasks to allow students more chances to practice and participate. Secondly, teachers can try to reduce students' fear and increase their confidence by creating a supportive classroom environment. They can do this by providing praise and encouragement when students participate in class and make mistakes. Also, using teaching approaches that focus on students can give students an equal chance to take part in classroom discourse instead of teacher-centred approaches. Lastly, educational authorities can arrange workshops to

teach instructors how to use CLT properly in their classes and find practical ways to promote interaction and speaking in EFL classrooms.

8 Recommendations

Following the findings and discussions presented above, some implications for practice are suggested here. To boost interactive classroom activities and Kurdish EFL students' communication performance, teachers should conduct more interactive activities (discussion, pair work, role-plays, problem-solving tasks, etc.) and allow students to get more opportunities to meaningfully use the target language and interact with peers in the classroom.

Moreover, Teachers should create a supportive classroom environment and encourage students to participate confidently in speaking activities. Teachers should avoid excessive interruptions and corrections during speaking activities.

Teacher-training institutions should provide workshops on CLT and interactive teaching methods to help teachers improve students' communication skills.

Curriculum developers and policymakers should support the use of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach instead of the Grammar Translation Method to promote student-centered learning. Future researchers are also encouraged to conduct further studies on classroom interaction and communicative language teaching among Kurdish EFL students.

9 Limitations of the Study

While this study provided useful observations regarding the challenges Kurdish EFL students encounter in interactive classroom settings, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study's scope was confined to a single university. Furthermore, classroom observation was not adopted in this study due to time restriction and feasibility issues. Lastly, the primary data for this study came from questionnaires and interviews, which might have been shaped by participants' individual viewpoints or feelings on particular subjects. However, the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data allowed this study to examine the research problem from multiple perspectives.

10 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could explore interactive classroom problems in different universities and levels of learning at Kurdistan Region. Furthermore, classroom observation could be applied to allow researchers look at patterns of classroom interaction face-to-face. It would also be interesting for future studies to explore teachers' beliefs about communicative





classroom practices and implementation of certain communicative teaching strategies to improve students' communicative competence.

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