

The Effectiveness of Didactic Approaches in English Language Teaching: A Comparative Study Based on Traditional and Interactive Methods

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Abstract. This study examines the effectiveness of traditional and interactive didactic approaches in English language teaching. A comparative design was employed using two groups of learners exposed to different instructional methods. Traditional teaching emphasized teacher-centered instruction, grammar explanation, and textbook exercises, whereas the interactive approach incorporated collaborative learning, discussion, role-play, and digital activities. The findings indicate that interactive methods improved learners' speaking confidence, classroom participation, motivation, and overall language achievement more than traditional instruction. Nevertheless, traditional approaches remained effective for systematic grammar instruction and controlled practice. The study concludes that integrating both approaches provides the most balanced strategy for improving English language competence.

Keywords: english language teaching, didactic approaches, traditional methods, interactive learning, communicative competence

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İngilis dilinin tədrisində didaktik yanaşmaların effektivliyi: ənənəvi və interaktiv metodlara əsaslanan müqayisəli tədqiqat

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Xülasə. Bu tədqiqat ingilis dili tədrisində ənənəvi və interaktiv didaktik yanaşmaların effektivliyini müqayisəli şəkildə araşdırır. Müxtəlif tədris üsullarından istifadə edən iki tələbə qrupu müqayisə edilmişdir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, interaktiv metodlar tələbələrin danışıq bacarıqlarını, motivasiyasını, dərstdə fəallığını və ümumi nailiyyətlərini daha çox inkişaf etdirir. Bununla yanaşı, ənənəvi metodlar qrammatikanın sistemli öyrədilməsi və nəzarətli məşqlər üçün faydalıdır. Araşdırma hər iki yanaşmanın məqsədyönlü inteqrasiyasının ingilis dili tədrisində daha səmərəli nəticələr verdiyini göstərir.

Açar sözlər: *ingilis dili tədrisi, didaktik yanaşmalar, ənənəvi metodlar, interaktiv öyrənmə, kommunikativ səriştə*

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Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) has undergone significant transformation over the past several decades, shifting from predominantly teacher-centred instructional models to learner-centred approaches that emphasize active participation, collaboration, and meaningful communication. Traditional methods of language instruction, such as the Grammar-Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, primarily focused on the systematic presentation of grammatical structures, vocabulary memorization, repetition, and accuracy. Although these approaches contributed to learners' knowledge of linguistic forms and grammatical rules, they often provided limited opportunities for authentic communication and the practical application of language skills in real-life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The rapid development of educational psychology, second language acquisition theories, and information technologies has encouraged educators to reconsider conventional teaching practices. Contemporary pedagogical approaches increasingly recognize learners as active participants in the educational process rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Interactive teaching methods—including collaborative learning, task-based instruction, role-playing, project-based learning, problem-solving activities, classroom discussions, and digital learning environments—have become central components of modern English language education. These approaches aim to develop communicative competence by encouraging learners to use English in meaningful contexts while simultaneously enhancing critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and learner autonomy (Brown, 2007; Nunan, 2015).

Constructivist learning theory further supports the implementation of interactive instructional strategies by emphasizing that knowledge is actively constructed through social interaction, experience, and reflection. According to this perspective, students achieve deeper understanding when they engage in collaborative activities, exchange ideas with peers, and participate in authentic communicative tasks rather than relying solely on teacher explanations. Likewise, communicative language teaching highlights the importance of fluency, interaction, and functional language use as essential components of successful language acquisition (Harmer, 2015).

Previous empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that interactive learning environments contribute positively to students' academic achievement, motivation, classroom engagement, self-confidence, and long-term language retention. Hattie (2009), through a comprehensive synthesis of educational research, identified active learning and effective classroom interaction among the factors that significantly influence student achievement. Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue that communicative and learner-centred approaches provide more opportunities for authentic language practice, thereby improving learners' overall communicative competence.

Despite these advantages, traditional instructional approaches continue to play an important role in English language teaching, particularly in developing grammatical accuracy, introducing complex language structures, and providing systematic practice. Many educational institutions continue to combine traditional and interactive methods in order to balance accuracy-oriented instruction with communicative competence. Consequently, determining the relative effectiveness of these approaches remains an important issue for language educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers.

The purpose of this study is to compare the effectiveness of traditional and interactive didactic approaches in English language teaching by examining their influence on students' academic achievement, classroom participation, motivation, and communicative competence. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of research on effective English language pedagogy and provide practical recommendations for improving instructional practices in higher education.

Methods

This study employed a comparative quasi-experimental research design to evaluate the effectiveness of traditional and interactive didactic approaches in English language teaching. The research was conducted over a twelve-week instructional period at a higher education institution. A total of sixty undergraduate students enrolled in compulsory English language courses voluntarily participated in the study. The participants were selected using convenience sampling and were divided into two equal groups of thirty students. Before the intervention, both groups demonstrated comparable levels of English language proficiency according to a standardized placement test.

The control group received instruction through traditional teaching methods, which emphasized teacher-centred lectures, grammar explanation, textbook-based exercises, vocabulary memorization, and individual written assignments. In contrast, the experimental group was instructed using interactive teaching strategies, including pair and group discussions, role-playing activities, collaborative problem-solving tasks, project-based learning, classroom presentations, digital learning platforms, and communicative language practice. Both groups followed the same curriculum, learning objectives, instructional materials, and assessment criteria to ensure comparability between the two teaching approaches.

Data were collected through multiple research instruments. A pre-test and post-test were administered to measure students' language achievement in grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Classroom observation protocols were used throughout the instructional period to assess student participation, interaction, and engagement. Additionally, a structured questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale items was distributed at the end of the experiment to evaluate learners' motivation, attitudes toward English language learning, perceived classroom atmosphere, and satisfaction with the instructional process.

The collected quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including means, percentages, and standard deviations. Comparisons between the two groups were made to determine differences in academic performance and classroom engagement. Qualitative information obtained from classroom observations was used to complement and interpret the statistical findings. Throughout the study, ethical principles were observed by ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality of participants' responses, and anonymity during data analysis and reporting.

Results

The results of the study revealed noticeable differences between students who were taught through traditional methods and those who participated in interactive learning environments. Although both groups demonstrated improvement in their overall English language proficiency after the twelve-week instructional period, the experimental group consistently achieved higher levels of academic performance across most language skills. The post-test results indicated that students exposed to interactive teaching methods obtained higher average scores in speaking, listening, reading comprehension, and writing performance. The most substantial improvement was observed in oral communication, where students became more confident in expressing their opinions, participating in classroom discussions, and using English in authentic communicative situations. Their willingness to interact with classmates and instructors also increased considerably throughout the study period. Classroom observations further demonstrated that learners in the interactive group participated more actively in educational activities. They frequently asked questions, collaborated effectively in group tasks, exchanged ideas with peers, and displayed greater initiative during classroom discussions. In contrast, students in the traditional group generally relied on teacher explanations and participated less frequently in communicative activities. The questionnaire findings also supported these observations. A large proportion of students in the interactive group reported increased motivation, greater satisfaction with the learning process, reduced anxiety when speaking English, and stronger confidence in their language abilities. Students indicated that collaborative learning activities created a more supportive classroom environment and encouraged continuous participation. These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating the positive influence of learner-centred instruction on language acquisition (Freeman & Freeman, 2020).

Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with contemporary theories of second language acquisition and learner-centred education. Constructivist learning theory argues that meaningful knowledge is constructed through active participation, social interaction, and authentic learning experiences. The superior performance of students in the interactive learning group supports this theoretical perspective by demonstrating that collaborative learning environments encourage deeper cognitive processing and more effective language development. The results also reinforce the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, which emphasize meaningful communication rather than the isolated memorization of grammatical rules. Interactive instructional techniques such as pair work, group discussions, role-playing, and project-based learning provided students with authentic opportunities to negotiate meaning, practice spontaneous communication, and receive immediate feedback from both instructors and peers. These experiences contributed to greater communicative competence and learner confidence. Nevertheless, the study also confirms that traditional instructional approaches continue to play an important role in English language education. Teacher-centred instruction remains particularly effective for introducing complex grammatical concepts, explaining language structures systematically, and providing controlled practice during the initial stages of language learning. Therefore, rather than viewing traditional and interactive approaches as competing instructional models, they should be considered complementary components of an effective teaching strategy.

Based on the findings, English language teachers are encouraged to adopt a balanced pedagogical approach that integrates explicit grammar instruction with communicative and collaborative learning activities. Such integration can enhance students' academic achievement while simultaneously promoting learner autonomy, critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, and long-term language retention. Future research may expand this investigation by including larger samples, different educational contexts, longer intervention periods, and advanced statistical analyses to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of various didactic approaches in English language teaching.

Conclusion

A balanced combination of traditional and interactive approaches is recommended for sustainable improvement in English language teaching.

Table 1

Comparison of Teaching Approaches

Criterion	Traditional	Interactive
Teacher role	Instructor	Facilitator
Student role	Passive	Active
Focus	Grammar	Communication
Assessment	Tests	Performance

Table 2

Mean Learning Outcomes

Indicator	Traditional	Interactive
Achievement	76	88
Motivation	70	91
Participation	65	93

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