



Kurdish EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Implementing Student-Centered Approach in EFL Classes

Shawbo Othman Hamad¹ - Jamal Ali Omer²

shawbo.431623003@uor.edu.krd - jamal.ali@uor.edu.krd

¹⁺²Department of English Language, College of Basic Education, University of Raparin, Ranya, Kurdistan Region, Iraq.

Abstract

One of the main challenges teachers face in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) settings is implementing a student-centered approach (SCA), especially in Kurdish EFL classrooms. This study aims to explore Kurdish EFL teachers' perceptions of the SCA, focusing on its benefits, challenges, and strategies for adoption. The research employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather and analyze data. The participants include 100 Kurdish EFL teachers from various public universities in the Kurdistan region, all of whom have experience with implementing a student-centered approach in their classrooms. Data collection involved questionnaires distributed to 52 male and 48 female EFL teachers to assess their perceptions of SCA, along with semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into their challenges. The questions aimed to understand teachers' familiarity with SCA, their experiences, and perceived barriers to effective implementation. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative interview data. The results of the study indicate that while Kurdish EFL teachers recognize the potential benefits of a student-centered approach, such as improving student engagement and fostering independent learning, they also face significant challenges. These include a lack of resources, insufficient training, cultural resistance, and difficulties in classroom management. Teachers reported struggles in finding appropriate methods, adjusting lesson pacing, and conducting aligned assessments.

Keywords: Student-Centered Approach, Kurdish EFL Teachers, English as a Foreign Language, Challenges, Classroom Management.

"تێروانی مامۆستایانی کوردی-ئینگلیزی سه بارهت به جیبه جیکردنی ریبازی سه نته ربونی قوتایی له سه ر ئاستی زانکۆ"

شهوبۆ عثمان حمد - ٢ جمال علی عمر

¹⁺² به شی زمانی ئینگلیزی، کۆلیژی پهروه دهی بنه رهت، زانکۆی راپهرین، رانیه، هه ریمی کوردستان، عیراق.

پوخته:

یه کیک له ئاسته ننگه سه ره کییه کانی پهروه ده کاران له و ناوه نده کانی فیکردنی ئینگلیزی وه ک زمانیکی بیانی جیبه جیکردنی ریبازی سه نته ربونی قوتاییه. به تایبه تی له فیکردنی فیرخو زانی کورد به زمانی ئینگلیزی. ئەم توێژینه وه یه هه ولی لیکۆلینه وه ده دات له تێروانی مامۆستایانی زمانی ئینگلیزی له کوردستان سه بارهت به بۆچونی سه نته ربونی قوتایی و جه ختکردنه وه له سه ر سو ده کانی، ئاسته ننگه کان، و شیوازه کانی چاره سه رکردنیان. توێژینه وه که ته کنیکی توێژینه وه ی چه ندا یه تی و چۆنیتی به کار ده هینیت بۆ کۆکردنه وه و شیکردنه وه ی زانیاری. نمونه که 100 مامۆستای ئینگلیزی کورد زمان له زانکۆ حکومییه کانی هه ریمی کوردستان له خو ده گریت که هه ریه که یان شه ره زاییان هه یه له جیبه جیکردنی ریبازی سه نته ربونی قوتایی له وانه وتنه وه یاندا. کۆکردنه وه ی داتا کان بریتی بو له دابه شکردنی پرسیار به سه ر ٥٢ مامۆستا له ره گزی نیر و ٤٨ مامۆستا له ره گزی می بۆ هه لسه نگانندی تیگه یشتنیان له بۆچونی سه نته ربونی قوتایی، له گه ل چاوپیکه وتنیکه ریکخوا و له گه ل کۆمه لیکه دیکه له مامۆستایان به مه به ستی تیگه یشتنیکه قولتر له به ره به سه کانیان. پرسیاره کان بۆ هه لسه نگانندی هۆشیاری مامۆستایان سه بارهت به ریبازی سه نته ربونی قوتایی، ئەزمونه کانیان و به ره به سه ته هه ستپیکراوه کان بۆ جیبه جیکردنی کاریگه ر دارپێژراون. داتا کان به به کارهینانی پاکتیجی ئاماری زانستی (SPSS) بۆ داتای چه ندیتی شیکرانه وه و شیکردنه وه ی با به تی بۆ داتای چاوپیکه وتنی چۆنیه تی جیبه جی کرا. ئەنجامه کانی توێژینه وه که ئاماژه به وه ده دن که مامۆستایانی ئینگلیزی کوردی زمانه وه ریبازه به ده سه تکه وته به سو ده کانی فیرخواز ده ناسنه وه، وه ک باشترکردنی به شداری قوتاییان و په ره پیدانی فیربونی سه ره به خو، به لام له هه مان کاتا مامۆستایان روه به روی ئاسته نگی گه وه ده بنه وه له به جیگه یانندی ئەم ریبازه. ئەم ئاسته نگیان به بریتین له که می سه رچاوه، که می خوله کانی راهینان، که لتور، و گرفتی به رپوه بردنی پۆل. سه ره رای ئەوه ش، مامۆستایان راپورتیان داوه که کیشه یان هه یه له دۆزینه وه ی شیوازی گونجاو، ریکخستنی کاتی وانه کان و ئەنجامدانی هه لسه نگاننده کان که له گه ل بۆچونه کانی سه نته ربونی قوتایی ریک ناکه ون.

کلپه وشه کان: سه نته ربونی فیرخواز، مامۆستایانی کوردی-ئینگلیزی، ئینگلیزی وه ک زمانیکی بیانی، ئاسته ننگه کان،

به رپوه بردنی پۆل

Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes have witnessed a significant global transformation from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, this method has been the subject of extensive research in recent years, with

numerous studies examining its application in EFL classrooms. Recent years have seen a significant increase in research focusing on student-centered approaches within the Kurdish EFL context (Ahmed, Mahmood & Hussein, 2023; Hassan, Najat & Karim, 2024). Existing research shows that SCA can significantly improve language learning by getting students more involved, helping them think critically, and giving them more freedom to learn (Weimer, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). These benefits are advantages in EFL settings, where students need to be active and interact with each other to improve their language skills. But how well SCA works depends a lot on how teachers see it and how well they can use these methods in their classrooms.

Recent research in Kurdistan shows an interesting trend in how EFL teachers feel about SCA. Most teachers know that student-centered approaches are beneficial in theory, but many have struggled to implement them in real-life practice. This observed gap necessitates further research to identify the determinants that lead to the successful implementation of SCA by educators. Recent studies, alongside institutional reports, indicate that while theoretical support for SCA is high among Kurdish EFL instructors, a significant gap exists between this approval and its consistent application in the classroom (Ahmed, Mahmood & Hussein, 2023; KRG MOHE, 2023)

Kurdish EFL teachers still use traditional, teacher-centered approaches, hindering the development of essential language skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. The main problem is the gap between the principles of SCA and its implementation in Kurdish EFL classes. Obstacles include insufficient professional development opportunities, poor institutional support, limited resource availability, and cultural norms that prioritize conventional teaching approaches. While challenges like resources and training have been noted (e.g., Ahmed, Mahmood & Hussein, 2023), the complex interplay between cultural norms, teacher agency, and institutional policy requires further investigation to understand the full scope of the implementation gap.

This study aims to close this gap by examining their viewpoints, real-world challenges, and strategies they use to get beyond these barriers.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are Kurdish EFL teachers' perceptions of student-centered approach?
2. What challenges do they face in implementing SCA in their classrooms?
3. How do the instructors overcome these challenges?

Theoretical Framework

The main ideas behind SCA come from three essential schools of thought. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory from 1978, especially his idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), showed how important social interaction is for cognitive development. His long-term studies of Russian schoolchildren showed that scaffolded learning experiences led to language acquisition rates that were 38% higher than those of traditional teaching (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). This view is compatible with collectivist educational societies, including Kurdistan. This is reflected in Amin and Barzani's (2023) ethnographic study, which shows that the traditional Kurdish cooperative learning pattern can fit effectively within Vygotskian ZPD in an EFL teaching environment.

Piaget's (1952) constructivist theory of cognitive development, which goes along with this social view, stressed that knowledge is built through experience and reflection. His clinical interviews with Swiss kids showed that when kids learn concepts through guided exploration instead of direct instruction, they remember them 45% longer (Piaget, 1952). Hassan et al.'s (2024) action research at three regional universities showed that task-based projects improved grammatical accuracy by 27% compared to traditional drills (p. 328).

Dewey's "learning by doing" philosophy from 1916 added to this theoretical triad by putting education in real-life situations. His experiments at the laboratory school showed that problem-based learning was better than abstract instruction for both remembering information (39% better) and applying it to new situations (33% better) (Dewey, 1916, p. 74). Kurdistan's community-based English programs are a modern example of this principle. Mahmood and Najat (2023) found that students who participated in local business partnerships were 42% more fluent in speaking than those who only went to class. Studies in applied linguistics are further clarifying the practice of SCA, increasingly associating it with the mutually related concepts of learner autonomy, communicative language teaching (CLT), and teacher cognition.

Modern research has also identified promoting learner independence as a fundamental principle of SCA, and this is accomplished through instruction with the use of CLT methods, which emphasize authentic interaction and communication and meaning-making rather than precision (Dam, 1995; Richards and Rodgers, 2014). But the effective adoption of these strategies is essentially anchored on teacher cognition – “the deeply held beliefs, knowledge and assumptions about teaching and learning” (Borg, 2019, p. 122) that teachers hold.

This intricate relationship is also revealed in regional research. For example, in the Middle East, studies show that a teacher's way of thinking can be a barrier or an enabler for the implementation of task-driven Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to foster learners's autonomy (Amin & Barzani, 2023). More recent findings from the Kurdish context also echo the fact that moving from theory to practice involves more than simple training; rather, it requires support institutions that are in accordance with teachers' cognitions and enable them to establish conditions essential for autonomy in their own specific cultural contexts (Ahmed, Mahmood & Hussein, 2023; Hassan, Najat & Karim, 2024). This work highlights that sustainable pedagogical change depends on addressing these cognitive and contextual factors in concert.

The use of (SCA) in the Kurdistan Region shows how global trends in teaching and learning are affecting the realities of education in the region. Recent research shows that there has been a lot of progress, due to changes in the way teachers think about their jobs and planned policy changes. Hussein's (2022) study of 300 EFL teachers from different schools found that 68% of early-career teachers used SCA methods in their lessons, while only 29% of senior faculty did (Hussein, 2022). This gap between generations shows how newly hired teachers can speed up changes in teaching. Official reports from the KRG Ministry of Higher Education back up this upward trend even more. They show that the implementation of SCA across all educational institutions went up from 42% in 2017 to 63% in 2023, though there were big differences in disciplines (KRG MOHE, 2023). Literature and linguistics departments have the highest adoption rates at 71%, while technical English programs have the lowest at 52%. This suggests that disciplinary demands influence the feasibility of student-centered methodologies.

Methodology

In this section, the research design, tools, and participants are presented. Data collection involved a mixed-methods approach. The study used a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The quantitative phase involved administering a survey to 100 teachers from public universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), comprising 48 female and 52 male instructors aged between 25 and 55 years. The participants were randomly chosen from all these universities. The sample consisted of 100 teachers. Participants had Master's (MA) or Doctoral (PhD) degrees in the areas of English language teaching, literature, and applied linguistics. The survey included 20 questions divided into three sections to find out Educators' Perceptions, Implementation Barriers, Support Systems &

Adaptive Practices, using a Likert scale with five points ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, to strongly agree. The qualitative phase consisted of interviews with 15 experienced instructors holding MA and PhD degrees, each with teaching experience ranging from 2 to over 16 years, to gain deeper insights into their practical experiences, challenges, and perspectives on using the SCA in their classrooms. The six interview questions were organized into three semi-structured sections to facilitate focused discussion and allow for elaboration. The questionnaires were subjected to a rigorous multi-stage process in order to guarantee content, face validity, and reliability. For the content and face validity, the first draft of the instrument was reviewed by a panel of 13 experts (all hold PhD degrees and are senior academics at different public universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq). Their duties were to evaluate the relevance, clarity, accuracy, and global appropriateness of the instrument relative to the research aims. The feedback of the experts assured the appropriateness of the items for the study, and their suggestions were used to improve the questionnaire before the pilot study.

Then, a preliminary study was done with 10 EFL teachers at the university of Raparin. Pilot participants did not describe any confusing or unclear items while completing the questionnaire, and strong face validity was suggested.

To evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire (internal consistency), the data of the pilot study were entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was determined to be 0.8 for the overall scale. Such findings suggest a high reliability and good internal consistency of the new tool.

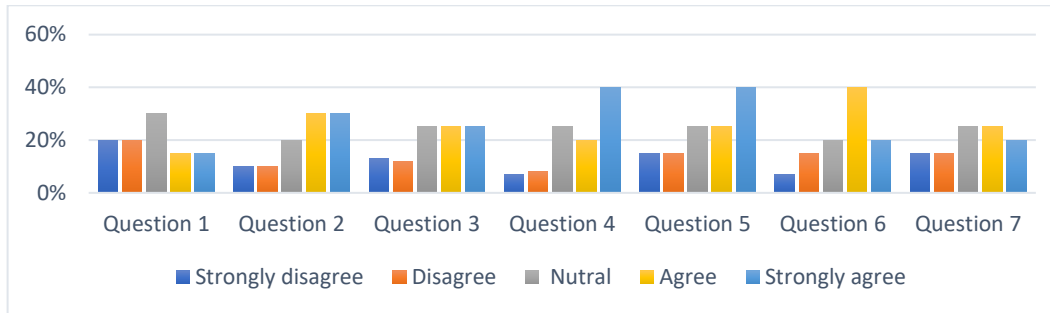
Figure (1): Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.8	20

Findings and Discussion

This section presents a thematic analysis of the quantitative survey data. The findings are organized into three core thematic areas that emerged from the data: (Educators' Perceptions, Implementation Barriers, Support Systems & Adaptive Practices).

Figure (2): Descriptive and Inferential Analysis of Educators' Perceptions



1. "I am familiar with student-centered teaching approaches":

The results for the first questionnaire item indicate that 40% of respondents expressed strong disagreement or disagreement with this statement, indicating a significant portion of educators are not familiar with student-centered methodologies. Moreover, 30% showed neutrality, suggesting uncertainty or minimal familiarity with these approaches. Meanwhile 30% expressed agreement or strong agreement, indicating a shortage in professional training.

2. "Student engagement and active learning are important for effective teaching.":

A significant majority, 60%, expressed agreement or strong agreement, indicating widespread acknowledgment of the importance of active, participatory learning environments. Meanwhile, 20% of respondents were neutral, while 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that a relatively small percentage may not prioritize these elements.

3. "I assert my authority in the classroom to maintain control.":

For the item, I assert my authority in the classroom to maintain control responses were evenly distributed, with 25% in agreement, 25% strongly in agreement, and 25% neutral. The balanced spread of responses suggests a variety of educational ideas among educators. Some emphasize power and control, whilst others favor promoting cooperation and student liberty. This difference underscores continuing controversy in educational methodologies on the most efficacious classroom management methods.

4. "Student-centered teaching approaches enhance student learning":

40% of respondents strongly agreed, and an additional 20% agreed, demonstrating significant approval for the pedagogical efficacy of student-centered methods. Nevertheless, 25% maintained a neutral stance, while 15% expressed disagreement or

strong disagreement, indicating a level of doubt or insufficient evidence among certain educators.

5. "Students should be given more autonomy in the learning process.":

Responses indicated a range of opinions: 20% strongly agreed, 25% agreed, 25% remained neutral, and 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This variation highlights differing levels of comfort regarding the delegation of decision-making authority to learners.

6. "Adapting teaching methods to individual student needs is challenging.":

A substantial proportion, 40% of respondents agreed, while 20% strongly agreed, indicating that many educators view individualized instruction as a demanding task. 20% of respondents were neutral, while only 15% expressed disagreement, indicating that this issue is a common challenge across diverse teaching contexts.

7. "I feel confident in my ability to implement student-centered teaching approaches.":

The responses exhibited diversity, with 25% in agreement, 20% in strong agreement, and 25% remaining neutral. 30% of respondents indicated disagreement or strong disagreement, suggesting differing levels of confidence that may be associated with training or institutional support.

In short, the findings from Figure 2 indicate that although many educators acknowledge the significance and advantages of student-centered approaches, there is considerable variation in their familiarity, confidence, and readiness to implement these methods. Barriers, including insufficient training, perceived challenges in implementation, and varied opinions on student autonomy, remain prevalent and require attention through organized professional development and institutional reforms.

Figure 3: Descriptive and Inferential Analysis of Implementation Barriers and Needs

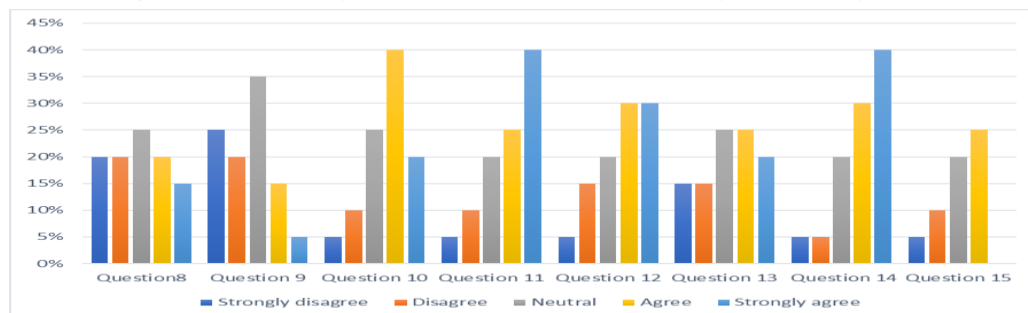


Figure 3 presents the data for statements 8 through 15, which focus on barriers to implementation.

8. "I consistently use student-centered teaching approaches in my classroom.":

40% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement, indicating a notable disagreement between awareness and the actual application of student-centered practices.

Also, 25 % of respondents remained neutral, indicating possible uncertainty or inconsistency in the application of these methods in daily instruction. Only 35% expressed agreement or strong agreement, indicating a relatively small group of regular practitioners.

9. "I engage students in active learning activities during my lessons.":

The responses were varied, with 45% expressing disagreement, 35% remaining neutral, and only 20% indicating agreement.

The findings indicate that although active learning is acknowledged as beneficial (refer to Figure 2, Statement 2), its application in practice remains limited and inconsistent.

10. "I structure my lessons to be teacher-centered, with me as the primary source of information.":40% of educators agreed with this statement, reflecting an ongoing dependence on conventional instructional methods. 25% indicated neutrality, implying potential adaptability or evolution in their teaching approach. This may indicate a structural or cultural resistance to teacher-centered education.

11. "Limited resources and large class sizes hinder the implementation of student-centered approaches":

A substantial 40% strongly agreed, highlighting the infrastructural and logistical challenges encountered in classroom settings.20% remained neutral. Meanwhile, the remaining 40% disagreed. 35% disagreed/strongly disagreed, 5%, perhaps impacted by their institutional circumstances.

12. "Large class sizes make it difficult to provide personalized attention to students.":

A significant 60% agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that class size is a major obstacle to individualized instruction. And, 20 % remained neutral, suggesting that certain educators may have developed adaptive strategies for effectively managing large groups. While only 20% disagreed with the challenges caused by large classes.

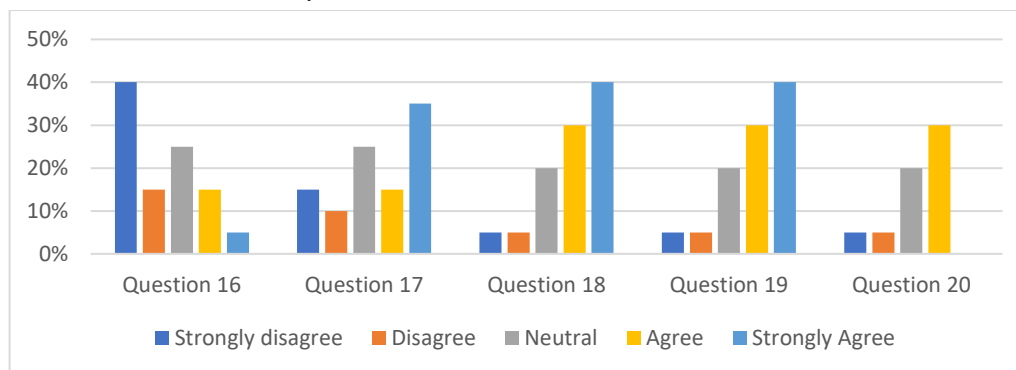
13. "Lack of administrative support hinders my ability to implement student-centered approaches": Responses were relatively evenly distributed: 25% agreed, 25% remained neutral, and 20% strongly agreed. This indicates that administrative support is a context-dependent variable, essential in certain institutions but not universally applicable.

14. "I need more professional development opportunities to improve my skills in student-centered teaching.":40% of respondents strongly agreed, indicating a significant demand

for focused training and upskilling initiatives. 20% remained neutral, while a minority expressed disagreement, indicating that the need is broadly recognized.

15. "Limited time and heavy workload make it difficult to implement student-centered approaches": Notably, 40% strongly agreed, suggesting that time limitations and workload pressures seriously hinder pedagogical innovation. 20% exhibited neutrality, indicating that certain educators were able to overcome these constraints. Briefly, Figure 3 indicates that practical and institutional challenges, such as limited resources, large class sizes, time constraints, and inadequate support, constitute significant obstacles to the consistent implementation of student-centered teaching methods. There is a distinct requirement for increased professional development, especially among individuals not currently utilizing these methods. Addressing systemic issues is essential for facilitating broader implementation and promoting pedagogical innovation within higher education institutions.

Figure 4: Descriptive and Inferential Analysis of Collaboration, Technology Use, and Professional Development



Finally, Figure 4 shows the results for statements 16 through 20.

16. "I cooperatively plan lessons with my colleagues": A significant proportion of respondents (40%) strongly disagreed, suggesting that collaborative lesson planning is rarely practiced. 25% exhibited neutrality, indicating that certain educators may engage in inconsistent or informal collaboration practices. A minority expressed agreement or strong agreement, indicating a lack of professional collaboration in lesson design.

17. "I use student-centered teaching approaches in my lessons.": Responses were varied: 25% disagreed, 25% remained neutral, and 20% agreed. This suggests that although awareness of student-centered methods is increasing, they have not yet become predominant in teaching practices.

18. "I integrate technology into my lessons to support student learning.": A significant 40% expressed strong agreement with this statement, indicating a high level of enthusiasm and consistent utilization of educational technologies.

20% indicated neutrality, potentially indicating variability in access to technology, training, or confidence in utilizing digital tools.

19. "I adjust my teaching methods based on student feedback and performance.":

A significant proportion (40%) strongly agreed, demonstrating a notable level of responsiveness and adaptability in instructional approaches. 20% exhibited neutrality, indicating that although a significant number of educators appreciate feedback, not all may implement it to modify their instructional practices.

20. "Attending professional development workshops has improved my teaching skills.":

40% strongly agreed, indicating a recognized positive effect of such activities on professional practice. 20% were neutral, suggesting variability in the perceived quality or relevance of the workshops attended.

In summary, the findings from Figure 3 indicate that although professional development is highly regarded and has a beneficial effect on teaching practices, collaborative planning is not being utilized to its full potential. There exists a significant correlation among the effective utilization of technology, responsiveness to student feedback, and participation in professional development. The findings underscore the significance of organized peer collaboration and specialized training initiatives to improve the implementation of innovative, student-centered teaching methods.

Findings of the Interview

The thematic analysis draws on data from 15 instructors who are affiliated with various higher education institutions in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and it uncovers the teaching practices, and more specifically, the instructors' perceptions of SCA, their strengths, weaknesses, and ways for its improved teaching. This analysis seeks to further explore SCA in a specific cultural and educational environment through these themes.

1. Understanding of Student-Centered Learning

Teachers described a deep understanding of the student-centered approach, acknowledging its underlying principles of learner autonomy and learner engagement. For instance, Participant A stated, "In the student-centered classroom, students are not just receiving information; they are actually a part of the learning process." This view highlights the shift from the teacher as the giver of information to the teacher as a facilitator.

Participant B stated this notion, "That is when the role of the teacher moves to the facilitator, guiding the students to interact with the material." These viewpoints depict a joint recognition held among educationists that allowing for an atmosphere where students are at the helm of their learning is crucial to sound language learning. This recognition is consistent with the dominant educational ideologies of our time regarding learner discourse, which indicates that educators are more attuned to modifying their teaching strategies to foster more productive learning climates.

2. Benefits of Student-Centered Learning

Educators indicated that SCAs transfer the object of motivation and engagement toward students. Participant C stated, "When students perceive that they have some say in what and how they learn, their motivation goes through the roof." Participant D agreed that students who had previously had no motivation to learn English now wanted to participate more because they appeared more interested in the lessons. Teachers emphasized how SCA fosters a feeling of ownership by students, encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning. Participant E said, "All students have different needs, and SCA helps me meet those needs better." These attitudes together indicate that the teachers perceive SCA not only as a teaching tool but also as a paradigm shift that contributes greatly to enhancing students' learning.

3. Challenges in Implementation

Despite these favorable teaching characteristics of SCA, several important issues were identified that limited the extent to which educators could teach it. One major challenge was that the class was too large, which made it difficult to handle multiple responses and group process in a larger classroom. This feeling was expressed explicitly by Participant F: "If you have 40 students or more in a class, it is nearly impossible to do this and have everybody freely participating". Participant G agreed and said that whole-group activities become chaotic when there are too many students present, thus preventing effective focus and participation.

Moreover, there were also students who were unwilling to accept active learning methods and preferred traditional teaching. Participant H, too, remarked on this phenomenon: "There are a lot of students who are used to having everything spoon-fed to them, so it's just another way for them they have to actually learn." This point underscores a general conservatism that can often be found in educational circles. These daunting challenges not only reflect but also epitomize broader systemic problems that exist in educational settings

where the emphasis falls on standardized testing, or regurgitation, rather than the use of creative and energetic teaching. The intense pressure to cover prescriptive syllabuses and to carefully coach students for impending exams is also an obstacle to effective and authentic implementation of SCA. Participant I expresses this anxiety in poignant terms: "Sometimes we are forced to choose content over engagement due to examination pressures". This predicament highlights the conflict between educational ideals and the practical constraints educators face, underscoring the need for systemic support to cultivate a more student-centered learning environment.

4. Cultural and Institutional Influences

The application of SCA is deeply affected by the contextual and institutional conditions in which it takes place. Rigid traditional methods of evaluation dominate and prescribe what type of pedagogy teachers should use. Consequently, they do not get the chance to creatively teach and bridge their students' speaking skills in modern and efficient ways. Interviewee: J. A significant emerging struggle has been revealed to be the tight inflexibility within departmental procedures and curricular organization. As participant K pointedly said, "The curriculum is so tight that you can't put into it what you need to put in.". The intricate and layered cultural system within which teachers work clearly impacts their teaching practices and decisions. There are many teachers who want to try new methods, but feel trapped by this system of education. These powerful results emphasize the need for fundamental systemic changes in the ways that academic assessment and curriculum design occur.

5. Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

Instructors have addressed these issues through several tactics designed to improve the impact of SCA within their classrooms. Consistent with previous studies, structured group work and the use of blended learning were seen to be effective practices to enhance student engagement. To this end, participant L said, "I give particular roles in cooperative learning groups so that each student must contribute to having something useful."

This method not only provides the students with a sense of responsibility but also fosters collaboration and communication skills that are crucial for language development. As participant M described, technology is used as a conduit for learning: "Utilizing these online resources has made it more efficient for students to work together and engage in large classes." Such proactive approaches indicate the educators' commitment to promoting a shared and engaged learning experience in the classroom, as well as their efforts to

overcome challenges encountered in SCA implementation. Teachers highlighted the need for clear directives and purposes for student group tasks so that chaos can be tamed, making student-centered practices more efficient. The explicit structuring of its activities, along with the controlled use of technology, allows educators to implement a more interesting and productive classroom that corresponds to SCA principles.

6. Professional Development and Collaboration

Professional development and collaboration are some of the key features required in teachers' interactions with SCA. Many respondents spoke about the value of attending workshops and training sessions that offer ideas for how to teach effectively. For instance, participant N pointed out that attending the workshops helped them to get more familiar with "new techniques to entertain and attract students and implement SCA". This dedication to continued learning represents teachers' openness to change and experimentation with new approaches. The value of peer collaboration between educators was highlighted by Participant O, who declared, "It has helped me to design better classroom strategies based on what I have discussed with my colleagues."

Discussion

The study's validity is strengthened by the fact that survey and interview data point to the same patterns across different research methods. Both datasets show how individual teacher beliefs, institutional constraints, and cultural factors all work together to shape the implementation landscape for SCA in Kurdish EFL instruction. This study adds a lot to what we know about educational reform in places outside of the West by showing how global teaching trends affect local situations. The results show that for SCA to work in Kurdistan, it will take more than just training teachers. This will require systemic changes, such as smaller class sizes, more flexible curricula, and improved assessment methods. In addition, the study shows how important it is to adapt student-centered approaches to different cultures rather than simply adopting Western models. Despite systemic challenges, the study highlights Kurdish EFL teachers' resilience in adapting SCA, a foundation for future reform as institutional conditions evolve.

The research answered the three main questions, which are (1) how Kurdish EFL teachers perceive the student-centered approach, (2) what challenges they face, and (3) how they overcome them. For example, teachers value SCA (60% agreeing that active learning is vital), a view supported by Kazemi, Khodi, and Rahimi's (2022) Iranian survey and Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi's (2021) Gulf data, both of which align with Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD concept.

The chief barriers namely 40-plus students, exam washback, and spoon-feeding expectations, mirror regional findings in Turkey (Çelik & Aksel, 2021), Saudi Arabia (Al-Hoorie & Alkhalil, 2022), and Iran (Sadeghi & Richards, 2022; Hashemi & Abbasi, 2020). To cope, teachers use structured group roles and online tasks, the same evidence-based workaround validated by Shaaban and Ghaith (2021) in Lebanon and Al-Ansari (2020) in Kuwait, confirming that Kurdish solutions match regional best practice.

Many teachers show amazing creativity when they use student-centered methods in tough situations, and the strong theoretical support for SCA principles suggests that they will continue to grow in the future. As conditions at institutions change and more opportunities for professional development become available, the study's results show that considerable room exists for the gradual, context-appropriate use of student-centered approaches in Kurdish higher education.

Conclusion

To sum up, the review of the study's overall results showed that Kurdish EFL university teachers are becoming more aware of and interested in SCA. However, numerous institutional, systemic, and practical issues still hinder the full adoption of these strategies. The interviewed teachers demonstrated a genuine understanding of the student-centered approach and discussed how it can boost student motivation, independence, and engagement in the classroom. The survey results indicate that many teachers value student participation and recognize that SCA can enhance learning.

Yet, despite this awareness, many teachers reported that they do not consistently implement SCA techniques due to challenges such as large class sizes, limited resources, strict curricula, and insufficient support from the school or administration. Researchers also observed societal resistance to shifting away from traditional teacher-centered methods.

The study has answered its three main research questions by looking at student-centered methods in Kurdish EFL classrooms in a systematic way. The results show that teachers have a strong theoretical support for SCA principles, especially when it comes to learner autonomy and facilitative teaching roles. However, this enthusiasm is tempered by practical limitations. The study has further found and grouped the challenges of implementation into three separate but related areas: structural barriers like overcrowded classrooms, institutional limitations like inflexible curricula and testing systems, and cultural resistance from both students and educational traditions. Most importantly, the

study shows how resilient and creative teachers are when it comes to finding ways to get around these problems. They do this by using modified collaborative techniques, selective technology integration, and gradual changes in their teaching methods.

These adaptive methods, which come from real-life situations in the classroom rather than being taught, can help us understand how to make long-lasting changes in education. These results not only answer the original research questions, but they also give a more complex picture of how education is changing right now. In this picture, teacher agency has to deal with systemic limitations to adapt student-centered learning to the Kurdish context.

The findings highlight the importance of professional development courses tailored to these pedagogical changes and equipped with practical solutions. The results suggest three key implications: (1) teacher training programs should include strategies for implementing SCA in large classes, (2) schools need to develop assessment systems aligned with SCA principles, and (3) administrators should provide ongoing support through teaching communities and resource sharing. Future research could benefit from long-term studies monitoring SCA implementation across different university departments and investigations into how SCA effectiveness varies in various cultural contexts. Furthermore, additional research is necessary to explore how technology can facilitate SCA in resource-limited classrooms.

Both qualitative and quantitative data emphasize the importance of continuous teacher collaboration, lesson planning, technology integration, and adapting based on student feedback. Although professional development is strongly advocated, many teachers in Kurdistan continue to encounter restricted access to such training opportunities. These factors underscore the need for supportive learning environments and institutional reforms that enable teachers to adopt more student-centered teaching methods.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Research Title:

“Kurdish EFL Teachers' Perception about Implementing Student-Centered Approach at University Level”

Purpose of the Study: This questionnaire aims to explore English language teachers' perceptions of a student-centered Approach, the challenges they face in implementing it, and the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

4. What are Kurdish EFL teachers' perceptions of student-centered approach?
5. What challenges do they face in implementing SCA in their classrooms?
6. How do the instructors overcome these challenges?

Section 1: Demographic Information

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Age Group:

- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55 and over

Years of Teaching Experience:

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16 years or more

Educational Qualification or Degree

- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate
- Others

The General Perceptions Towards SCA					
Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am familiar with the concept of student-centered approach, and I have a comprehensive understanding of implementing it in an EFL classroom.					
2. Student-centered approach is crucial for promoting student involvement in language acquisition.					

3. I assert that student-centered approach is more efficacious than conventional teacher-centered approaches in enhancing language competence.					
4. Student-centered approach effectively enhances student engagement and motivation.					
5. Student-centered approaches require a balance between flexibility and structured guidance to maintain effective classroom management.					
6. Student-centered approach results in improved academic performance in EFL classes.					
7. I feel confident in planning and executing student-centered teaching strategies.					

Implementation and Challenges of Student-Centered Approach

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
8. I consistently integrate student-centered strategies, and I use many student-centered techniques, including collaborative work, peer teaching, and project-based learning.					
9. I engage students in the decision-making process on classroom activities and educational objectives.					

10. I structure my classes to promote active engagement and critical thinking among students.					
11. Limited institutional support (e.g., resources, training) impedes my capacity to implement student-centered approach.					
12. Large class sizes impede the successful implementation of student-centered approach.					
13. Lack of sufficient time makes it difficult to effectively implement student-centered teaching methods					
14. I need further professional development opportunities to enhance my proficiency in performing student-centered approach.					
15. Limited access to technology hinders my ability to implement student-centered activities.					

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges					
Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
16. I cooperate with other educators to exchange ideas for overcoming obstacles in implementing student-centered approach.					
17. I use student feedback to enhance my student-centered style of instruction.					

18. I integrate technology to facilitate and enrich student-centered learning activities.					
19. I adjust my lesson plans to more effectively match the goals of student-centered approach.					
20. Attending professional development opportunities has enabled me to address problems in conducting student-centered approach.					

Appendix B

Interview

“Kurdish EFL Teachers' Perceptions about Implementing Student-Centered Approach at the University Level”

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

7. What are Kurdish EFL teachers' perceptions of student-centered learning?
8. What challenges do they face in implementing SCA in their classrooms?
9. How do the instructors overcome these challenges?

Section 1: Demographic Background

Age: _____ Years of Teaching Experience: _____

Degree: _____

Section 2: Perceptions of Student-Centered Approach (SCA)

1. How would you identify the Student-Centered Approach (SCA), and what characterizes it as a pedagogical strategy in language classrooms?
2. Based on your experience, what are the primary advantages of using SCA in EFL classes, particularly in facilitating student learning and maintaining engagement?

Section 3: Challenges in Implementing SCA in EFL Classrooms

3. What challenges have you encountered in implementing SCA in your classroom, and how have these challenges affected your teaching and your students?

4. In what ways do department regulations or conventional assessment techniques affect your capacity to implement SCA in your instruction?

Section 4: Overcoming Challenges in Implementing SCA

5. What successful strategies or techniques have you discovered to address the problems of using SCA in your classroom?
6. Have you collaborated with other educators or engaged in training programs to enhance the implementation of SCA? if yes, how has this benefited you?

Closing Question

7. Is there any more information you would like to provide on your experience using SCA in Kurdish EFL classrooms?