

Applying Communicative Approach in Teaching English as a Foreign Language: a Case Study of Alzaiem Alazhri University Student

AHMED ABRAHIM AHMED

Ph.D in ELT, College of Education

Professor MAHMOUD ALI AHMED

Supervisor

Sudan University of Science and Technology

Abstract:

The first part of this research is comprised of an experimental study to investigate the comparative usefulness of the Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in teaching English at the University level. A pre-test, post-test group design was used to measure achievement and attitude of the students. The second part of this research is comprised of a survey study to investigate the Sudanese teachers' perception of the CLT approach and their perceived impediments in its application at the University level. A semi-structured questionnaire was used for this purpose, and ten teachers were interviewed.

Key words: Sudan University, Communicative Approach, teaching English.

INTRODUCTION:

The worldwide increasing demand for good communication in the English language has increased significantly the responsibility of the English language teacher. The application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has faced problems and resistance in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (Ellis, 1996; Li, 1998; Liao, 2000). A positive relationship between communicative

competence and language learning strategies has been reported. The purpose of the study was to evaluate implementation of a CLT approach in teaching English in Alzaeim Alazhari University Students where the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) has been used. This situation is producing incompetent users of the English language in Sudan. This was a mixed method research, both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to collect and analyze the data. A triangulation of data source was used to ensure the authenticity of findings. An experiment and survey studies were conducted, whereas two objectives guided this research: (1) to evaluate the feasibility of applying the CLT approach at Alzaeim Alazhari University Students levels of education. This objective was achieved through students' perspective by conducting an experimental study with 56 students for three months; whereas two groups of students were taught using the GTM and CLT approaches separately. The two groups' achievement and attitude in pre-test and post-test were compared; (2) to evaluate the teachers' perceptions about the theory and practice of the CLT approach and, the teachers' perceived difficulties in applying the CLT approach to teaching English to the University Students in Sudan. This objective was achieved by conducting a survey research with English language teachers at Sudanese Universities in Sudan. A structured questionnaire was used for this purpose. Besides this, ten teachers were selected amongst the questionnaire respondents for a semi-structured interview. The respondents identified four major kinds of difficulties, related to: (a) teachers, (b) students, (c) the education system in Sudan and, (d) the theory and practice of CLT itself.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

English, though not English language, though not spoken as first language in Sudan, is the primary secondary language to learn for education, business, traveling abroad or other needs. The traditionally used GTM is not producing desired results, as the ever expanding domains of knowledge, globalization of the world, and an increasing use of the English language in all spheres of life demand the coming generation to become experts in the use of the English language, not only in its written form but also in its oral communication; it is used

as a tool and means towards greater goals. English in Sudan should be taught from an applied linguistics point of view (Jilani, 2004: 08). There should be a link in what the students learn in the classroom and in their real life situations. English is considered as a foreign language in Sudan. However some misconceptions so prevail about its status as a foreign or second language. The proponents of the idea of Ahmed Abraham and Congman Rao Applying Communicative Approach in Teaching English. English as a foreign language claim that though English is the language of business, court, military affairs, education etc., it is not a means of communication among the masses. Students rarely find any chance to use English outside the classroom. Hence, English has a foreign language context in Sudan. The difference of English as a Second Language (ESL) and EFL is one of the major challenges in adopting the CLT approach in a non-native environment. The practitioners are trying their best to implement this methodology equally well in both contexts, nevertheless its application in an EFL context is still under high criticism from different corners. Both of these contexts have learners whose first language is not English, yet teaching is distinct in both cases. The difference of these two contexts has been distinguished well by Ellis (1996: 216) in the following words:

ESL is integrative, in that it is designed to help individuals function in the community, EFL is a part of the school curriculum, and therefore subject to contextual factors such as support from principal and the local community, government policy etc. It is also dependent on the teacher's language proficiency, teaching resource and, the availability of suitable material.

CLT approach is now being applied in many non-native countries where English has a foreign language (FL) orientation. For a clear understanding of the situation of English Language Teaching (ELT) in an EFL context, we should take a cursory look at some of the countries where it is being implemented. The purpose of this look is to see similarities and dissimilarities of the issues related to its implementation which have their origin in the varying socio-economic and cultural conditions. A review of the related literature can be helpful in drawing conclusions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To find out solutions of teaching grammar through communicative approach.
2. To solve some difficulties that face teachers in teaching grammar through communicative approach.
3. To trace the problems that face learners in learning grammar through communicative approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

With the advent of globalization, the ‘ideal native speaker’ idea has been on rapid decline. English language is supposed to serve the purpose of non-native English speakers who now outnumber native speakers. Since its inception, the proponents of CLT have been blowing trumpets to prove its efficacy in ELT. Although the matter is mostly in favor of applying the CLT approach in an EFL classroom, some criticism has been laid against it, which is, for the most part, justified when we evaluate its implementation in Sudan especially Alzaeim Alazhari University Student where EFL teaching faced a lot of hurdle caused by local conditions. Chowdhry (2010) wrote “when CLT was introduced, the English as a foreign language (EFL) context in which it would inevitably be applied was not considered”. As Ramanathan (1999: 212) also asserted “the much professed and popular theories (i.e. CLT) devised in the inner-circle of countries may or may not be compatible with the teaching conditions in the outer-circle countries”. This highly westernized methodology of ELT was alien to the locally sanctioned teacher-centered system where the authority of the teacher has local and cultural approval. Although teaching should never be stagnant, a paradigmatic shift in teaching methodology can cause a total collapse in language teaching. ESL/EFL necessarily takes a cross-national and multi-cultural aspect, which has to consider local needs and socio-economic conditions. Researchers are keen to know its efficacy in Sudan.

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY:

The researcher used two tools to collect the information of this study. One includes the questionnaire which was given to (56)

Sudanese English teachers whom were selected randomly. The other tool was test which was given to the young learners at Alzaiem Alazhari University, the academic year 2016-2017. Two groups of population were identified for carrying out this study, students who are target of teaching English grammar through communicative method and teachers who are engaged in evaluation. First population group of University Student (Male – female), second group consisted of ELT teachers. The test used to students of fourth year, pre-test and post-test practice on English Grammar to get the nature of the problems which hinder Students in learning grammar through communicative method (see appendix). The test consist of guiding items to communicate language, another test consist of grammar items (multiple choices). There were 56 students per class at University Class.

The researcher has chosen two samples to represent this study as such:

Firstly: Sudanese teachers of English from various universities who responded to questionnaire.

Secondly: young learners at Alzaiem Alazhari University Students, the academic year 2016-2017 (Male and Female). Most of the teachers are experienced English department were about (45) teachers.

STUDY EXPERIMENT:

There were actually one Class in this study (male and female). The students in this Class were hand Grammar test. The main difference between the tests, in terms of studied, was that the researcher could use Communicative method in teaching grammar.

The researcher used Multiple Choices in tests to help Students to explain things when they were not clear grammatical items.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT:

To guarantee the content validity and reliability of the teachers, Questionnaire, the researcher has adopted the following procedures: the questionnaire was reviewed by five judges who are Ph.D. holders

specialized in evaluation and measurement, educational psychology, linguistics and curricula designers.(see appendix2) the researcher intended for the questionnaire could be fully examined and evaluated. Questionnaire was modified according to the judges, suggestions (some words were added, some difficult or unrelated items were deleted, some items were reconstructed) (see appendix 3). After typing the teachers, questionnaire in its final version, it was distributed to (15) participants from the study population to ensure its face validity. Then this pilot questionnaire was collected. The majority of the participants commented that the questionnaire is clear. The validity of the questionnaire is that the tool measures the exact aim which it is designed for. The researcher calculated the validity statistically using the following. The researcher calculated the reliability coefficient for the measurement, which was used in the questionnaire using (split. half). This method stands on the principle of dividing the answer location coefficient) between the two parts, finally, the (reliability coefficient) was calculated according to cronbaach.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The analysis of the experiment will focus on answering a vital question: What is the frequency of the learning grammar through communicative method that facing University's Students at Alzaiem Alzhari University students. To answer this question, we computed the mean standard deviation, standard communicative method and ranges for the grammar test. To find out whether each test had made any progress as a direct result of instruction. Table (1) In the light of result above. shows that a majority of respondents (51.1%) strongly agree and agree that teacher use communicative method in classroom. Only (37.8%) don't agree to that. This justifies that teacher need to be trained and developed to use communicative method inside the classroom.

Where as table (2)explained that a vast majority of respondents (%71.1) strongly agree and agree that students should be well trained to use communicative method in English language classroom. Only (%26.7) don't agree on that. This indicates that teachers need to be trained to use activities communicatively inside the classrooms.

Finally with above two scoring of percentages agree and disagree were proved that communicative method solve the problem of learning grammar through application of communicative activities such as role-play, problem-solving and also we could solve this difficulties through techniques such as(pair work, group work, games and discussion.

Statements gave the highest disagreement and lowest percentage with a percentage of (57. %) whereas It's disagrees which is (29.9%) with the idea of The Highest and Lowest Disagreement through the Teachers' responses.

Table (1)

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly Agree	10	22.2%
Agree	13	28.9%
Neutral	5	11.1%
Disagree	8	17.8%
Strongly disagree	9	20.0%
Total	45	100.0%

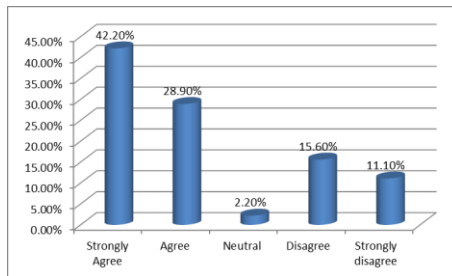
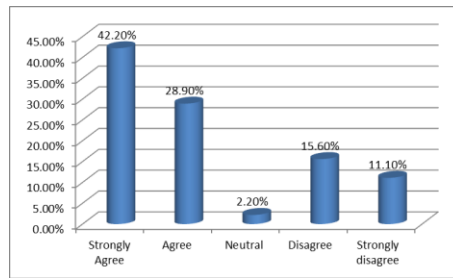


Table (2)

Value	Frequencies	Percent
Strongly Agree	19	42.2%
Agree	13	28.9%
Neutral	1	2.2%
Disagree	7	15.6%
Strongly disagree	5	11.1%
Total	45	100.0%



DISCUSSION

The results of the previous tables displayed the fact that, in all cases the teachers' questionnaire showed progress in learning grammar rules. Teachers believe that their students who learn grammar through communicative method faced less speaking difficulties and were able to speak more fluently. The discussion gave the results provided by activities and the improvement in their performance. That means, learners can benefit from the circumstances provided by communicative method such as motivation, group discussion, role-play, pair work and social interaction. All these factors made a close connection between learners in side and enhanced their performance in learning grammar communicatively.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory case study investigated the stated beliefs and actual instructional practices of two experienced teachers of English language at Alzaiem Alazhari University in Sudan. The findings suggest that teachers do indeed have a set of complex belief systems that are sometimes not reflected in their classroom practices for various complicated reasons, some directly related to context of teaching. Even though generalizations of this case study may be problematic, language teachers may learn much about the importance of accessing teachers' beliefs and comparing these beliefs with actual classroom practices. We also hope that this case study can act as a catalyst in enabling other teachers to reflect on and examine their own beliefs about their grammar teaching practices.

REFERENCES

1. Littlewoods, W. 1981. *Communicative Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Littlewood, W. 1992. *Teaching Oral Communication: A Methodological Framework*. Oxford: Blackwell.
3. Cheng, Y-Y. 1998. "Adapted Whole Language Teaching in an English Class in Junior High School." Master Dissertation. Department of English. National Kaoshiung Normal University, Kaohsiung.
4. Cunnings worth, A. 1995. *Choosing Your Course book*. Oxford: Heinemann.
5. Finocchiaro, M. and Brumfit, C. 1983. *The Functional-Notional Approach: From Theory to Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
6. Grant, N. 1987. *Making the Most of Your Textbook*. New York: Longman.
7. Howatt, A.P. R. 1984. *A History of English Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
8. Huang, H-l. 1999. "A Comparative Study of the Junior-high English Curriculum Standards and Textbook in Taiwan and Japan." Master Dissertation. Graduate Institute of Comparative Education. National Chi Nan University, Nantou.
9. Lee, A., Roberts, L. and Chew, M. 2002. *English Form 4*.
10. Johor Bahru: PGI Cipta Sdn. Bhd. Lee, A., Roberts, L. and Chew, M. 2003. *English Form 5*.
11. Johor Bahru: PGI Cipta Sdn. Bhd. Maley, A. 1986. "Xanadu- „A Miracle of Rare Device“: The Teaching of English in China." ed. by Valdes, J. M. *Cultural Bound: Bridging the Cultural Gap in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ministry of Education. 1992. *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris Tingkatan IV*. Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education.
12. Nan-I High School Editing Committee. 1999. *Senior High School English Book 1*. Tai-Nan: Nan-I.
13. Nan-I High School Editing Committee. 1999. *Senior High School English Book 2*. Tai-Nan: Nan-I.
14. Noor Azlina Yunus and Angeline Spykerman. 1996. *KBSM English Form Four*. Shah Alam: Fajar Bakti.
15. Richards, J.C. and Rodgers, T. 1986. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching: A Description and Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
16. Shih, Y-H, Lin, M-S and Brooks, S. (1999). *Far East English Reader for Senior High Schools, Book One*. The Far East Book Company.
17. Shih, Y-H, Lin, M-S and Brooks, S. 1999. *Far East English Reader for Senior High Schools, Book Three*. The Far East Book Company.
18. Spaventa, L. (ed.) 1980. *Towards the Creative Teaching of English*. London: Allen and Unwin.