



RESEARCH PAPER

Studying Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Methods in Pakistan: A
Pedagogical Study of Pakistani Classrooms

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Received: January 08, 2019 Accepted: June 15, 2018 Online: June 30, 2019 Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching and Grammar- Translation Method, Pedagogical Import, Teaching Method, Perceptions Corresponding Author: asmashahzad@cu ivehari.edu.pk	This study aimed at exploring teachers' perceptions regarding communicative language teaching (CLT) and investigated its effectiveness and barriers that hinder the utilization of this method to the fullest possible degree. Pakistan, being a special case of pedagogical import, lags behind in the field of sciences and arts. Built on a qualitative paradigm, the study employed structured interviews adapted from Sherwani and Kilic (2017) and thematic categories were analyzed. The researchers found that the teachers prefer CLT over traditionally popular method like Grammar Translation Method (GTM) for certain merits as it is teacher-directed, it stimulates learning and it employs real-life situations to prepare for real-life communicative tasks. The study pointed out that objectives associated with CLT are conditioned by the context of us, and factors like students' habit of cramming, use of GTM and obstructions, like lack of resources and qualified teachers, are the cause of failure to achieve maximum out of this method. The teachers' proper training is required so as to enable them to act as good manager of time, space and knowledge even in large classes

Introduction

Pakistan has been striving to improve the state of learning in general and English proficiency in particular to the effect that it may produce good graduates for real-life challenging tasks be that they are related to sciences, arts and humanities. Education as the bedrock of progress is undeniably subject to excellence in diverse aspects like syllabus, faculty and methods of teaching.

Seidlhofer (2005:339) believes that English is internationally used; it is being used equally by both non-native and native speakers.

Disappointment from traditional methods and approaches of language learning resulted from diverse factors like their teacher centeredness, ignoring learners' real-life needs, absence of motivations and interests (Shah & Brenzinger, 2018). Communicative language teaching (CLT) pursued a liberal approach and fashioned such language teaching methodology as induced not only desired degree of motivation and interest in learners but also prepared them for real-life communicative challenges (Littlewood, 2007). Abate (2014) also emphasized the need for a link between what the students learn in the classroom and real-life situations. It is a method that teaches grammar as well as knowledge of how to use language in their real lives. CLT gained enormous success all over the world and gradually replaced all other methods of teaching like the audio-lingual method popularized in the 1960s. Savignon (1972), Canale (1983); Littlewood (1981); Nunan (1991) and Widdowson (1990) made a great contribution to the development of theory and practice of this method which according to Wilkins (1972) should make a learner able to understand and express rather than use the language through greater emphasis on an outdated notion of vocabulary and grammar.

Benefits and Challenges

Littlewood (1981); Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983); Brumfit (1984); Johnson and Morrow (1981); Richards and Rodgers (2001); Larsen-Freeman (1986); Celce-Murcia (1991) and Johnson (1982) described a long list of the benefits of using CLT for effective learning of English language. According to Chang & Goswami (2011), CLT develops and maintains rapport among the teacher and the student regarding certain context. They further added that CLT brings into consideration various competencies such as linguistic, communicative, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence as compared to GTM that focuses only on grammatical competence. CLT emphasizes the learners' own participation in language learning that ultimately results in quick, efficient and effective learning as compared to other methods of teaching. Thamarana (2015) concluded that CLT is the most natural way to teach the language skills to as it yields fluency and accuracy and it may help learners use language in real-life situations by improving the communicative competence.

CLT, along with its spectacular advantages have some limitation. CLT may not be compatible with certain context (Bax, 2003). Similarly, according to Abate (2014), misunderstandings of CLT are actually intimidation to language learning. The limitation of CLT is that it only focuses on meaning ignoring form; it ignores learners' errors and focuses more on fluency rather than accuracy. The areas or contexts where cultural stereotype insights are powerful, the use of CLT may be out of place. If the example of the Asian students is taken, we find that they don't like to work in groups and the brilliant students are interested in grammar (Thornbury, 2006). Some other challenges include insufficient facilities of teaching

material like lack of authentic language environment, textbooks and computer, internet and many more. But if the advantages are compared with the shortcomings, it has more advantages than shortcomings and the challenges that it faces can be handled. The use of new CLT-user-friendly techniques can help language teachers achieve positive outcomes (Abate, 2014).

Literature Review

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an umbrella term (Harmer, 2001). Rodgers (2014) considered CLT as a new model for understanding language teaching and learning. Cook (2013) believed that through CLT, the learners involved in learning the second language are made to go through exercises assigned to them by their teachers with a view to developing communicative skills. Richards and Rodgers (2014) believed that CLT started as a means to evolving ability in the students or language learners. In 1972 Dell Hymes coined the term 'communicative competence' that deals with those factors of our competence that support us to convey, interpret messages and communicate meanings in particular contexts (Brown, 2007, p.246). These observed facts participated in bringing a shift in language teaching in the late 1970s and early 1980s from an approach that centered on the linguistic structure to an approach focusing on communication known as Communicative Language Teaching.

Empirical Research on Language Teaching Methods

A great deal of discussion and research has been conducted so far to determine the effectiveness of CLT. Some of the recent studies have been listed to find the gap and rationale for the current research.

Chang and Goswami (2011) conducted a study at a Taiwanese College to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes toward CLT that showed that the teachers participating in research as respondents agree with the Core principles of CLT and also apply these principles while teaching. This study discovered that CLT impacts positively on language teaching. Another study focusing on the EFL teachers' perceptions of communicative language evaluation were led in Jordan. This study surveyed 76 Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions and 51 teachers of them gave their responses to the questionnaire. The data collected after the analysis indicated that Jordanian EFL teachers have positive behavior and attitude towards communicative language evaluation. It was recommended that EFL teachers should be provided with more awareness of communicative language (Al Shara'h, et al., 2011). El-Kelani (2011) conducted a survey to explore the perceptions of the EFL teachers toward the use of CLT at Kingdom of Saudi Arabia public and private schools. There were 36 EFL teachers who participated in this research. The results showed that there was a great difference between the perceptions of teachers working at private schools and the teachers working at public schools. The results showed that the teachers at private schools had more favorable perceptions when compared with the teachers at public schools. But the teachers at

both public and private schools the teacher's perceptions showed the lack of clear understanding of CLT. Ouyang (2012) explored the challenges faced by the teachers while implementing the basic ideologies related to CLT in teaching languages and concluded that more sociological research should be invited to explain upon the effectiveness of CLT as compared with other traditional methods. Furthermore, a study focusing on finding out the advantages of CLT implementation in grammar classes was carried out at Universidad Nacional. This study resulted in the revelation of the fact that CLT is helpful for English teachers. It enables them to take their grammar classes in a better way if applied appropriately (Badilla & Chacon, 2013).

Similar research was conducted by Zeeshan (2013) at Pakistani government secondary schools in Baluchistan in the province of Quetta that aimed at exploring both students and teachers' insights toward two approaches namely CLT and grammar-translation approach (GT). It showed that 13 teachers who were participating in this study displayed positive perceptions toward using CLT in language teaching and they also had negative and neutral views as well about GT. They suggested the implementation of CLT in language teaching classes at the schools where the research was being conducted. At Iranian high schools, Jafari, Shokrpour, and Gutterman (2015) conducted a study that aimed at investigating teachers' perceptions toward using CLT. This study showed that the teachers participating in research as respondents agree that CLT is beneficial whether it is implemented at the group or pair level. Sherwani & Kilic (2017) conducted a study in Soran town, in the northern part of Iraq. The data was collected from 58 EFL teachers from secondary and high school. They categorized the factors affecting CLT under four heads: educational factors, teacher factors, student factors, and CLT factors. These categories were taken into consideration for the present research and data was collected from the participant against these four categories. The questionnaire was adapted and modified according to the context of research. Noori (2018) collected the perceptions of Afghan teachers regarding CLT and concluded that they have a positive attitude about using CLT in English language classrooms but there are some challenges to implement it because of certain limitations of availability of resources etc. The present research addressed the need and pedagogical implementation of CLT as recorded by the university teachers. The study seeks to explore teachers' perceptions regarding the usefulness or the otherwise of the CLT in this part of the world and further highlight the factors that hamper its fullest implementation in Pakistani classrooms in reference to the English language teaching.

Material and Methods

The research is qualitative and descriptive in nature. Bryman (2012, p.380) asserted that qualitative research pays its focus more on collecting words, sharing experiences, opinions and feelings of the participants rather than just collecting numbers. Another reason is that qualitative research unfolds multiple aspects (Rahman, 2015) unlike quantitative research that uses numeric values and statistics

to analyses the data moreover it deals with a single aspect. So recording the perception would be far more convenient by using open-ended questions answered by the respondents in an interview.

Data sampling

The sample for the study was randomly selected from the selected universities according to the availability and convenience of the teachers. It consisted of 47 Language Teachers including 28 male and 19 female respondents having the teaching experience from 1-20 years. The sample was selected from the following universities of Punjab:

1. BZU, Vehari Campus
2. CUI, Vehari Campus
3. CUI, Sahiwal Campus
4. Education University, Vehari campus
5. UAF, Vehari Campus
6. ISP, Multan campus
7. BZU Multan

Tools of Research

The data were collected through a questionnaire based on factors affecting the CLT in language classroom proposed by Sherwani & Kilic (2017). Each major category consisted of 4 themes of statements relevant to the associated category. The structured interviews were recorded and in a few cases where the respondents didn't allow to record, notes were taken and afterwards transcribed against each thematic category.

Results and Discussion

The collected data was transcribed and arranged according to the thematic categories and interpreted likewise.

Teachers` Related Factors

All of the teachers were aware of the notion of CLT to some extent and expressed that it was the most suitable method to teach the English language in a natural way. They said that with the help of CLT the process of teaching became more effective and students were more involved and creative. However, there were some limitations that the teachers faced during the implementation of the method in classroom. It included a lack of resources and time to conduct certain activities, absence of relevant materials, classroom environment and mostly reported a pressure to get the contents of the course covered during a specified timeframe. Majority of the teachers said that these factors often made them less motivated to implement CLT in teaching. Teachers recommended those teachers

must be trained in new incorporations to the method and regular courses should be offered by the authorities to equip the teachers with new techniques. The results obtained regarding teachers related factor are quite in line with the research conducted by Liao (2003), Li (1998), Tsai (2007) and who found out that the role of the teacher needed to be exchanged with a facilitator, a guide and a source to provide information.

Students` Related Factors

It is not only teachers' related factors that contribute to either implementing or discarding CLT from teaching practices, but it also depends upon learners as the learning and teaching practices revolve exclusively around them. The respondents reported that most often they found the learners less motivated to play an active part in learning the English language. The teachers said that the learners did not want to get involved in practicing techniques of CLT during the first semester of the study program. The learners are from different backgrounds and the factor related to where they belong to or where they have been studied from contributed to practicing CLT in language classrooms. Communicative language teaching is considered unreal by them and hence they were unlikely to show any interest in it rather this approach might confuse them.

However, as they had to take part in activities like presentations and reflection, they started feeling comfortable with it. The same idea is maintained by those of Li (1998), Liao (2003), Tsai (2007) and Sherwani & Kilic (2017) that indicated that it is intricate, if not impracticable, for teachers to utilize CLT activities among students who are not fluent in English. It was strongly recommended by the teachers that students must know the postulates of CLT before it was implemented.

The respondents further explained that the CLT should not only be implemented at the university level but it should start from the grass-root level that is from schools as the students' foundations were built at that stage. Another viewpoint was that learners were unlikely to show interest towards CLT because they were habitual of learning from grammar-translation method (GTM) from the nursery class to graduation level and so to expose them to CLT suddenly resulted in lack of motivation as they have been learning English as a subject not as a language from the very beginning. They also suggested that it is vital to reflect on cultural differences between the urban and rural contexts of learners while implementing CLT. Another factor reported was the co-education in universities. Learners were less confident in performing activities in the presence of the opposite gender and resisted participation. The fear of being incorrect and facing embarrassment was another factor that was reported as a great hindrance in the implementation of CLT. The respondents suggested that proper planning should be there to familiarize the learners with CLT gradually.

Education System-Related Factors

Communicative language teaching does not only involve teachers and students but it also involves an education system which directly affects its implementation and the ways it is interpreted by the teachers and the learners as well.

The first and the foremost, respondents reported that one of the big reluctance in implementation of CLT was the examination pattern of the education system in Pakistan. The examination system followed the pattern to achieve marks rather than achieving a level of competence. Majority of the respondents agreed that at university level CLT might be implemented to a great extent as a specific percentage of the total marks was graded by the teachers and their communicative skills might be assessed and graded from that part of total marks by assigning them different tasks like presentations and role-playing etc. Another factor is the lack of resources and technical support from the education system and institution. The results were also analogous to the previous studies (Liao, 2003; Li, 1998). Fewer budgets were allocated to reach resources. Among all the universities visited to collect data, only CUI Vehari campus had a language lab for the learners and that, too, did not equip with all the technology needed for successful implementation of the method. Classes with a large number of students were yet another factor contributed to the impediment of implementing CLT. It took much time to involve all the students in different activities in the time period of one class. Group activities were also difficult to perform as the classroom is jam-packed with learners. Last but not the least, teachers said that they were not provided with enough time and space to implement CLT and there was not an atmosphere that could enhance their motivation to use activities and task-based teaching.

Conclusion

Based on the information provided by the respondents, it is concluded that the education system in Pakistan needs reforms where the teachers should be taken as a stakeholder to make policies and to put forth the new methodologies along with the necessary types of equipment and materials required implementing it. It was suggested that the number of learners in each class should be minimized, test-based courses should be revised, latest digital and non-digital media should be provided and teachers should be trained to make use of the resources. Sherwani & Kilic (2017) recommended that an EFL context is no suitable for CLT while it can be successfully implemented in an ESL context. In our context, this method can change the spirit of English language learning and teaching only if it is started from the very initial level. Starting from the simpler tasks and activities learners can be made habitual of learning language through tasks and activities. The teachers showed a very positive attitude towards the use of this method as it is a very fast and natural way to learn the English language. The authorities necessitate providing the education system with innovative and advanced technological support and should train the teachers to update the language learning and teaching process.

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