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The Need of Communicative Approach (in ELT) in Teacher Training Programmes in Pakistan

Muhammad Akram and Anser Mahmood

Abstract

Teacher education and teacher training are matters of hot discussion in Pakistan. The present study discusses that communicative approach in English language teaching is suffering from neglect in training programmes in Pakistan. Most of the teachers cling to the age-old Grammar Translation method. They do not adopt different classroom activities in ELT. The trainees do not take any interest in communicative approach in ELT and sometimes even the trainers also take no interest in training through communicative approach.

The neglect of communicative approach in the training programmes will lead to non-professionalism and it will only perpetuate the weaknesses of traditional way of teaching. It will definitely be a great hindrance to effective communication using English on the part of the learners. It has been commonly observed that students fail to write even a single page in English language even after completing their graduation. There is an urgent need to teach English language through communicative approach both in language classrooms and training programmes.

This study is an attempt to highlight the significant role of communicative approach in ELT and particularly in training programmes.

1 Introduction

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Communicative Language Teaching is the most prevalent framework used in EFL/ELT classes through out the world in modern time. The fundamental goal of teaching through CLT is to develop communicative competence. Communicative competence refers to the ability to exchange information in a foreign language with the native speakers of the language (Weiping & Juan 2005). CLT is considered to be a “learner-centred and experienced based view of second language teaching” (Richards & Rodgers 2006). Communication is among the most important skills for educators to possess. “The communication is lifeblood of the school; it is a process that links the individual, the group and the organisation” Lunenburg & Ornstein (1996:76).

According to Ghani (2003:105):

English in Pakistan serves as a gateway to success, to further education and to white collar jobs. It is the language of higher education and wider education and not the home language of the population except in the upper strata of society where it is spoken as a status symbol.

English is taught as the compulsory subject from the first grade in our curricula. English language teachers in Pakistan must approach teaching English as a Second Language from the perspective of applied linguistics (Akram & Mahmood 2007). We should realize the importance of CLT.

According to Wilkins (1972) and Canale and Swain (1980), functional definitions of language were viewed as the alternative units that could be used to create communicative syllabi for language teaching in the earlier version of CLT. In relation to the system of meanings that lay behind the communicative uses of language, Wilkins (1972) describes two types of meanings: notional categories (time, location etc.) and functional categories (requests, denials etc). In this earlier version, the terms ‘functional’ approach and ‘notional’ approach were used interchangeably with ‘communicative’ approach, and those functions and notions were the basic units used in organising the syllabus.

2 Teachers and Teacher Trainers in CLT

The teacher’s role was reorganised and redefined as that of ‘facilitator of learning’ and ‘synthesizer’ in the early years of 1970s when Communicative Language Teaching was introduced in the field of language teaching. According to Bhushan (2010), in CLT the teacher has two main roles:

- (i) To facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom;
- (ii) The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning teaching group.

Martin and Balla (1991) say that teacher trainees enter a teacher education course with a belief that teaching involved imparting knowledge to a class. While some of the teacher trainees were aware that they may need to do this in different ways, they did not give clear explanations about how they might do this.

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Teaching English in Pakistan

The present state of teaching English in Pakistan is very poor. The government of Pakistan offers different professional educational programmes in teacher training institutes or through distance education programmes from Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) which are mainly theoretical and rely on lectures delivered by the trainers or dictation.

To obtain the credential required for school teaching, candidates usually complete a nine-month programme (B.Ed. and/or M.Ed.) at a training institute or the equivalent through distance education from AIOU. In Pakistan the current system of professional education for teachers cannot be called up to the mark. It has a little or no effect on the quality of teaching in primary and middle schools particularly in rural areas.

The newly appointed/recruited teachers show little enthusiasm for the teaching profession and poor orientation to study during training with special reference to language teaching. The teachers must also become knowledgeable about the importance of language in the learning process which gives a vital role to language teachers (Akpinar 2009).

It has been observed that the grammatical syllabus does not help that much to develop learners' communicative competence in language classes particularly in Pakistan. By replacing grammar by communicative functions the learners' communicative competence can be developed more effectively. The present study is an attempt to show the teachers' attitude towards the use of CLT in language classrooms in Pakistan.

3 Method

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 200 primary teachers (75 male and 125 female) of Sargodha district, who were attending the training programmes by different professional organisations. They were aged 22-27.

Table 1: Description of Gender and Location

		Gender		Total
		female	Male	
Location	Rural	48	25	73
	Urban	77	50	127
Total		125	75	200

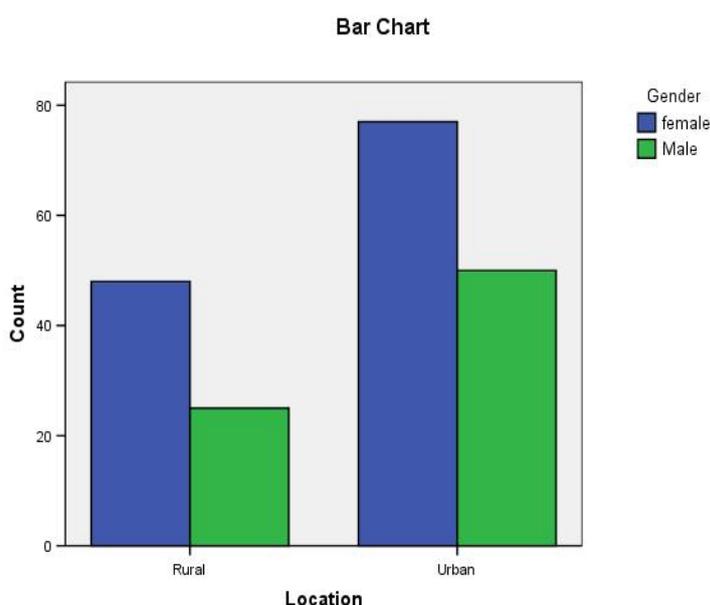


Figure 1: Gender and Location

3.2 Instrument

In order to measure the attitudes of the participants towards ELT, a questionnaire was administered to two hundred participants. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items on five point liker scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) and the Cronbach's Alpha was calculated as .860. The data was collected from the above mentioned participants and was analysed.

4 Result and discussion

An effective communication skills course in training programmes would be more beneficial if it is given for the immediate adaptation of these skills into trainees teaching practices. The result of the present study clearly indicates that communicative approach is a key factor in language learning and teaching. But it has been observed that in our training programmes the communicative or the functional purpose of the language is totally neglected and the fresh teachers also do not pay any heed towards this phenomenon.

The results also make it clear that communicative approach is better than all the other methods of language teaching in general and Grammar Translation Method GTM in particular because the GTM is more concerned about teaching about language rather than language itself whereas Communicative approach establishes a direct bond between the experience and the expression.

The findings show that CLT is the easy and effective way of teaching. CLT enhances the learners' confidence and it gives a sense of satisfaction to the teacher as well in the sense that he is successful in making the student use the foreign language in his conversation. The study

shows that the learners find it as an interesting method of learning and take active participation in this method of language teaching. CLT gives clarity to the expression and it gives the learners power to communicate.

5 Conclusion

A teacher's lack of use of CLT is manifested in the poor standard and the performance of the students. It has been observed that teachers' lack of knowledge and their lack of use of CLT are due to the fact that teaching is not their first choice. They have picked up the prophetic profession just to avoid unemployment and starvation. The policy makers should frame and chalk out the use of CLT in training programmes where by a teacher can improve on his existing capabilities. There are following recommendations on the basis of the present study:

- Pre-service training in language teaching is required because the teacher is not well equipped with the required training to teach a foreign language and particularly the use of CLT should be given special attention in training programmes.
- In-service training in language teaching should also be overhauled with the use of new teaching techniques including the use of CLT as necessary part of the training programmes.
- The functional or communicative aspect of language is totally ignored. The master trainers and the teacher educators should pay a special attention to this aspect.
- The recent versions of CLT assume that communicative language use can not be learned through individual sentences isolated from broader communicative contexts, so the communication practices should be there in the training programmes and the syllabi contents.

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Appendix Mean Score and Std. Deviation

No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Communication is a key factor in language teaching	4.83	.485
2	Communicative approach is a better method of language teaching	4.53	.501
3	Communicative competence is an essential part of communicative approach	4.58	.496
4	Communicative approach is better than Grammar Translation Method	4.45	.498
5	Communication skill is basic need of language teacher	4.47	.500
6	Communicative approach provides better opportunities to teach English language	4.45	.498
7	Communicative approach provides better opportunities to learn English language	4.46	.500
8	Communicative approach is an easy way to teach English	4.49	.501
9	Communicative approach lends better comprehension to the learners	4.47	.500
10	I find this approach very interesting	4.55	.499
11	I get more through communicative approach than other methods	4.47	.500
12	I feel confident in communicating ideas to others	4.47	.500

13	The learners find active participation in this method of language teaching	4.47	.500
14	I think communicative approach is a difficult task to comprehend	2.06	.598
15	Communicative approach is dull and boring	2.07	.443
16	Communicative approach lends clarity to the expression	4.16	.653
17	Communicative approach is wastage of time and effort	1.76	.514
18	Better learning is possible only through better communication skill	4.28	.666
19	Communicative approach is a monotonous activity	1.72	.485
20	Communicative approach enhances the communicative power of the learners	4.17	.502

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