

Effectiveness of CLT in developing Technical English Writing Skills at Undergraduate Level in the Context of Pakistan

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The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), has always been considered useful for teaching English Language across the world. Current study was conducted to compare the effectiveness of the Lecture Method (LM) and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on teaching 'Technical English Writing' to the undergraduate students in Pakistan. The written test is used to assess the five traits of technical writing which are conciseness, precision, clarity, audience recognition, and document design. A classical experimental design was used to measure the comparative progress of LM group and CLT group. The experimental group was taught through CLT based activities while LM was adopted for teaching the control group. Finally, SPSS-25 was used to analyze the data collected through pre-test, post test score of both CLT and LM groups. The results of study indicated a significant difference between the gain scores of CLT group and LM group. From these results it can be concluded that CLT method is more effective than LM to be used at undergraduate level in Pakistan. Results of the study can be generalized to other students involved in learning of technical English writing skills.

Keywords: communicative language teaching (CLT), lecture method (LT), conciseness, precision, clarity, document design.

Partaking in the global market inevitably requires proficiency in English language. Proficient English communicators, generally, do not only succeed in their academic careers but they also exhibit their professional skills in the global market efficiently (Ahmad & Rehman, 2016). Therefore, almost all universities in Pakistan offer courses for developing English communication in order to prepare students for the effective communication in the national as well as international market (Panhwar, 2017). Majority of students in Pakistan, after ten or twelve years of formal education remain unable to demonstrate a command on the usage of English language. Application of traditional methods of teaching in Second Language (L2) classrooms is one of the many reasons for this incapability. Better

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1. Sehrish Khan Developed hypothesis, methodology, analysis
2. Sadaf Taj Data Collection
3. Rukhsana Y. Maroof Write up

use of a foreign language requires not only the 'linguistic competence' but it also needs the 'communicative competence' which enables the communicators to make a better usage of any language in the global context. 'Communicative competence' can be acquired with a practical use of the L2 in different situations (Khan, et al., 2016). Challenges of a practical scenario increase the motivation level of the L2 users' and activate their entire passive knowledge that otherwise remains inactive. Obsolete pedagogical approaches such as Grammar Translation Method (GTM) at school level and Lecture Method (LM) at university level remain inept of providing students with an opportunity of making practical use of the target language. Overuse of traditional methods like lecturing and GTM is one of the reasons that prevent non-traditional methods' success in nonnative countries like Pakistan. Switching to the nontraditional methods of teaching English may help the English language learners to augment their 'communicative competence'. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is one of those nontraditional approaches to teaching that is suggested in the Pakistani context for teaching English Language (Panhwar, 2017).

CLT being interactive in nature fits with the learners' communicative needs. Multiple researches have been conducted to study the various aspects of CLT approach worldwide. Application of CLT approach in the L2 classrooms, designing class activities and their implementation, use of L1 for teaching L2, and efficacy of CLT approach in cultivating students' ability of English communication have remained the main focus of these researches. The present study aims at exploring the efficacy of CLT approach at undergraduate level in the context of Pakistan.

Literature Review

Lecture, a traditional pedagogical method has always remained popular among the learners and teachers for its clear logical and effective transmission of even obscure and complex concepts (Bligh, 1998) yet language learning does not suffice with the mere understanding of perplex ideas rather it requires practice of the acquired language competencies in real life. Learners' engagement in the lecture for a longer time has always been debated by the researchers and educators. Widowson, (2003), estimates the maximum time duration of students' attention during a lecture as ten minutes whereas Meltzer and Manivanan (2002) observed a decrease in students' concentration during the first 25 minutes of a lecture. Therefore, in spite of being a useful way of imparting a great deal of information quickly, lecturing has proved tedious for students. Bligh (1998), after reviewing numerous studies, concludes that lecturing is not an effective method of developing critical thinking among students as it does not bring required change in their attitudes by teaching behavioral skills to them. It was also found that critical thinking and meta-cognitive awareness of nursing students increased significantly after using the Problem-based Learning (PBL) method of instruction which remained low while using the LM (Gholami et al., 2016). Another research compared the performance of two groups of students, finding a huge difference between the performance of both. The group taught by lecture Method scored significantly lower than the one which received the instruction through non-traditional method (Afurobi, Izuabga, Obiefuna, & Ifegbo, 2015). Though, Scerbo et al. (1992) contend that students take less and less notes as lectures proceed indicating the least learning occurring, however, Marmah (2014) found students preferring to be taught by the LM in the universities. Bala et al. (2017) found the LM more effective for teaching primary school students as compared to a Smart Class Method. Thus, regardless of all the limitations, lecturing is still considered a popular method of teaching among educators and learners. Despite the fact that traditional methods of language teaching such as Lecture Method LM or Grammar Translation Method GTM, provide students with an opportunity to learn grammar, vocabulary and the sentence structure, thus, assisting them toward acquiring linguistic competence, however, the effective use of

a language requires communicative competence i.e., ability to make a creative and innovative use of a language in real life situations.

A speedy change in communication technologies is changing language pedagogy (Kern, 2006). CLT is a mainstream of teaching English, which is aimed at cultivating students' ability of communication in real life situations (Chang, (2011). Since its initiation in the European countries in 1970, it has been a favorite research area for the educators across the world. Moreover, Second Language (L2) teachers are motivated to use CLT in their classrooms, as it views the language as a communication tool. After being recognized as a teaching approach that contributes to learners' communicative competence, CLT gained popularity in the nonnative countries too.

In the CLT context, learners are required to participate actively in learning new language. They need to take active part in devising the methods to use the language in changing situations, instead of merely following the information provided by teachers and books. Moreover, language teachers are not authoritarians as in a traditional classroom, rather they are the facilitators, Richard and Rodger (2014).The researchers further observe that teachers' role in CLT approach is more dynamic. They not only facilitate communication among students but also participate in all class activities. They are not only the need analysts but also the counsellors. Thus, they manage the process of language learning by creating more fascinating learning environment for them. After a thorough analysis of major English Language Teaching (FLT) methods applied at schools, Sierra, and Fernando, (1995) also proposed an active role for teachers. In CLT approach teachers need to design their own content for interaction and methodology for instruction as well as for evaluation, likewise they need to create their own materials for the classroom activities too. Learners also need to participate actively to accomplish the communication tasks assigned to them. Thus, CLT empowers the instructor by minimizing their dependence on other people's designs and methods as well as motivates learners to make an innovative use of language.

Padmavathi and Reddy (2013) assert that the changing scenario of English has affected its curriculum, teaching methodologies and the medium of instruction in an EFL/ ESL class. Cook (2001) observed that most of the L2 classes were being conducted in L1. Levine, (2014) analyzed the effects of using L1 on foreign language learning students. Meskill and Mossop (2000) and Widdowson (2003) maintain that the use of L1 must be minimized in ESL/EFL classes. 'Input Hypothesis', by Krashen (2003), claimed that when students are given a comprehensive output in the target language then they can learn in a better way. Moreover less L2 input would result in more difficulty in the process of L2 acquisition. Analysis of an English textbook was done to explore the issues in implementation of CLT in Saudi Arabia. The study concludes that despite being balanced in accuracy and fluency, the book still includes such activities which refrain students from using the target language in the class (Alharbi, 2020). A meaningful interaction in the L2 needs to be the goal of language classes where students must use the L2 to "negotiate meaning" in order to understand 'what is being said' in a communicative and real-world context (Savignon, 1987). A survey of NATC graduates was conducted to highlight the importance of learning L2. Results revealed that graduates of higher education institutions must be communicatively competent in the English language in order to achieve occupational aims in industry and business. Results of the studies showing the importance of L2 usage in the foreign language classes, eventually, drove to the adoption of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Today, CLT has become a medium of instruction in many classes of language and it minimized the use of L1 as a technique of teaching (Dudley-Evans & Johns, 1981).

CLT has been oriented as a means for developing 'communicative competence', which depicts as "an ability when to speak, when not, and...what to talk about, with whom, when, where, and in what manner", as cited by Richards and Rodgers (2014). Widdowson (2003), explains that 'competence' represents proficiency at its most abstract and psychologically deepest level. 'Communicative competence' aims at acquiring language proficiency through natural interaction. Swain (1980) defines 'communicative competence' more comprehensively, by including grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence in it.

Dudley-Evans and Johns (1981) reiterate that the institutions of higher education, in Asia, must aim to develop the students' ability of using the second language (L2) spontaneously and appropriately. Wang (2011) also motivates language teacher to go beyond "push button English", exercises in ELT classes. Fatt (1991) argues that higher education institutions can play an important role to help students in achieving 'communicative competence' at undergraduate and graduate level. The traditional pedagogical methods of language teaching do not instill the 'communicative competence' in students instead they aim to develop only linguistic competence, completely ignoring the development of 'communicative competence' and 'linguistic performance'. Grammatical rules, definitions and word lists are memorized by students but the required oral and written practice is not provided to enable students of using this linguistic competence in real life situations. Thus, CLT approaches the language as a tool for establishing and maintaining relations in society, and develops 'communicative competence' of language learners.

In view of the fact that CLT approach was basically developed in the western context, it includes many characteristics of the western culture, like individualism, creativity, self-expression and social interaction. Therefore, the implementation of CLT in Asian countries encounters some cultural and contextual issues. Several studies conducted in China focus on the CLT activities in classrooms in the Chinese context. Liao and Zhao (2012) examine the implementation of CLT activities from the perspective of beginning Mandarin teachers. The researchers identify the major difficulties faced by English language teachers in the application of CLT. Bell and Bogan (2013) also point out the challenges faced by the L2 teachers such as cultural conflicts and lack of appropriate teachers' training. The study concludes that CLT can play more significant role in teaching when it is integrated with other factors including classroom environment, educational level of learners, and also cultural background of teachers and learners. At the end of a contrastive study of CLT and GTM, Chang (2011) states that the Communicative Approach focuses on fluency while the Grammar Translation Method is more related to accuracy. A combination of both methods is suggested.

Wong and Barrea-Marlys (2012) point out the misunderstandings among the educators regarding the CLT methodology. His article explores the common perceptions of educators and their process of implementing CLT at college-level. Although, the results exhibit the lack of awareness about the CLT among most of the participating teachers, however, they agreed that a communicative approach could prove more helpful in learning languages. It is further argued by the researcher that most of the teachers are confused about the untraditional language methodologies of language teaching, therefore, they don't take risk of using these methods in classrooms.

Ahmad and Rao (2013) analyze the comparative usefulness of GTM and CLT in Pakistan. They observe that a more positive attitude toward L2 learning was demonstrated by the group that underwent the CLT treatment. They also conducted a survey to identify the issues hampering the implementation of CLT approach in Pakistani classrooms. These issues include lack of teachers' training, overcrowded classrooms, grammar-based examinations and inappropriate syllabus. Khan,

Ayaz and Saif (2016) analyze the comparative effects of GTM and CLT on achievement and attitude of Pakistani students and conclude that the activities performed in a CLT based classroom have a positive impact on the students' academic achievement. Panhwar (2017) specifically focuses on the causes of breakdown in developing countries in their research and affirm that CLT approach needs to be adapted to the cultural and contextual aspects of developing countries. Ahmad and Rehman (2016) conducted their study in private colleges of Pakistan and their study results advocate the effectiveness of CLT. The analysis proves the appropriateness of CLT for Pakistani ESL context.

Objectives: This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. To what degree students' performance in experimental group differ from the performance of students in the control group?
2. How does the implementation of CLT approach in teaching 'Rules of Technical Writing' affect the gain scores of the experimental group?

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that incorporating CLT activities in teaching 'Rules of Technical Writing' might affect the gain scores of students in the experimental group.

Method

Sample

The sample comprised of 60 male students of BS (3rd Semester) from the Department of Earth Science in COMSATS University Abbottabad Campus. Age range of sample was 19-22 years. The achievement of the admission test showed that they shared a similar level of the overall English proficiency. The sample was divided into two equal groups by using the probability sampling technique (odd and even method). Each group comprised of 30 students. The Communicative Approach and Lecture Method were used to teach the two groups respectively.

Instruments

Written-test

It is a written test that consists of 25 questions. The test is used to assess five writing skills of students which are conciseness, precision, clarity, audience recognition, and document design. The marks on the test show how skillful a student is in writing. This writing test has good reliability ($\alpha=.80$) to use with this sample.

Procedure

To conduct this study a sample of 60 students who shared a similar level of English proficiency were selected. Results of admission achievements tests were used to test the similarity in English proficiency. The study was conducted inside classrooms under controlled environment. All the 60 students were examined on pre-written test. During pretest participants took a written examination of fifty minutes. After pre-test, students were divided into two equal groups by using odd and even method of probability sampling. CLT group was taught through the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), while another group was instructed through the Lecture Method (LM) for teaching technical English writing. The Clarity, Conciseness, Accuracy, Audience Recognition, and accessible document designing remained the target topics during this period. Students in both groups were allowed to use the same learning materials. Instructor gave four lessons of ninety each week for

a period of one month. After that a post-test of all participants was conducted by using the same written test. Results of pre-test and posttest were analyzed through SPSS-25.

Results

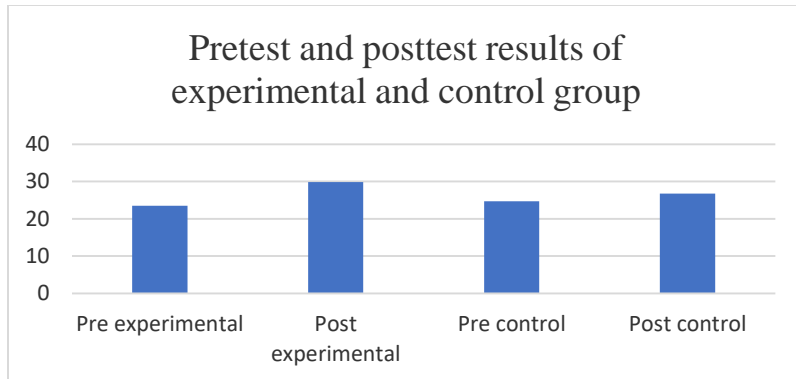
Table 1

Mean Difference between Pretest scores and Post-test scores of experimental and control group (30)

| Variable | Pretest | | Posttest | | <i>t</i> (29) | <i>P</i> | 95% CI | | Cohen'sd |
|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | | <i>LL</i> | <i>UL</i> | |
| Experimental | 23.5 | 10.07 | 29.8 | 6.25 | 3.2 | .003 | 10.3 | 2.26 | 0.75 |
| Control | 24.64 | 7.68 | 26.78 | 6.28 | 1.2 | .233 | 5.7 | 1.5 | 0.3 |

Table 1 shows a significant difference ($t \geq 2$ & $p \leq 0.05$) in pretest and posttest results of experimental group as compared to control group where there is an insignificant difference ($t \leq 2$, $p \geq 0.05$) in pretest and posttest results. Cohen's *d* value ($D=0.75$) in experimental group shows moderate effect size while Cohen's *d* value ($D=0.3$) shows small effect size. Class interval shows the adequate range of scores. These findings prove that experimental group showed greater improvement than control group. See figure 1.

Figure 1



Discussion

The current study was conducted to explore the effects of CLT on experimental group. The study was conducted on 60 undergraduate students who were divided into two groups of 30 each. Both groups were compared on a written test of technical writing skills. A pretest posttest approach was used.

Results indicated a significant difference ($t=3.2$, $p \leq 0.05$) between the scores of pretest and posttest in CLT group suggesting that the L2 learners do perform better if they are taught through the communicative language teaching methodology (Table 1).

The hypothesis of the study states that, "the CLT Approach is effective for L2 teaching in Pakistan at undergraduate level". Table 1 shows the results for this hypothesis. From the *t* value and

mean scores of controlled group and experimental group it is obvious both groups differ significantly on gained scores in post-tests.

The results of this hypothesis are consistent with the previous researches. Lightbown and Spada (1990) conducted a research on 100 native speakers of French language (aged 10–12 years). Participants of this study had already got training of ESL for a period of five months. Study concluded that CLT brings higher scores in language classes. Spada (1997) did the same study with native learners from Spain. Fotos (1994) explored word order tasks in his study and found that these tasks successfully promote the proficiency gains and L2 interaction in the learners. Wong and Marlys (2012) in their study on the L2 teacher's perceptions and implementations with regard to CLT found that the college level teachers in Southern United States adopt CLT for explicit grammar instructions for good outcome. Richards and Rodgers (2014) and Rodgers (2001) recommend the CLT for teaching in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes as they notice the positive results of this approach being used by most L2 teachers in their classrooms.

Limitations

Current study is a fruitful addition to education department though it has some limitations. Study was carried out with earth sciences students, therefore, these results cannot be generalized to other students. Moreover, this study was conducted for a period of one month it would be more valid if the time period can be extended.

Implications of the study

The findings of current study can be helpful for teachers, parents, educators, and the authorities working for the English language teaching. The results of this study suggest that communicative competence should be developed in the L2 learners. The study opened the ways for upcoming researchers to use CLT method with other English learners. Current study explored the effectiveness of CLT method at undergraduate level. Results of the study can be generalized to students at school, college and undergraduate level.

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