

The Effect of the Communicative Approach on Teaching Grammar to EFL Learners: A Case Study of Wad Babi Secondary School, Khartoum Sudan

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Abstract: *All over the world, students are more or less the same with respect to their needs when they learn any foreign language. One need that seems a common denominator is the quest for learning the grammar of the foreign language. No aspect of language teaching and learning has been more controversial and debatable than that of grammar. Thornbury(1999:14) states that No other issue has so preoccupied theorists and practitioners as the grammar debate, and the history of language teaching is essentially the history of the claims and counterclaims for and against the teaching of grammar. Differences in attitude to the role of grammar underpin differences between methods, between teachers, and between learners.*

Keywords: Communicative Approach(CA), English as a Foreign Language(EFL)

1. Introduction

CLT approach is regarded by many linguists as one of the most effective approaches to ELT. Since its early evolution in Europe in the early 1970s, CLT has been a main basis of influence on language teaching practice worldwide. CLT has extended in scope and has been used by different educators in different ways (Burnaby and Sun,1989; Ellis,1996; Li,1998;Xiaoju,1984). It is most likely that all educators when asked to mention the methodology they apply in their classroom, the majority of English teachers' choices the CLT approach as their preferable choice. However, when asked to describe what they mean by "communicative" they give a variety of explanations (Richards,2006:2). The impact of teaching grammar through different methods of teaching was widely explored, but the use of the CA when teaching grammar remains uninvestigated in Sudanese secondary schools.

This study aims to investigate the effect of the Communicative Language Teaching when applied in teaching grammar to Sudanese school students in terms of its impact on the students' performance and interest in learning grammar. Its object is to gauge the influence of the Communicative Approach on the teaching and learning of grammar in government high secondary schools in Sudan as well as the teachers and students evaluation of the effectiveness of communicative activities in grammar lessons. In Sudanese government schools students face difficulty in using grammar so as to communicate with in real life situation . They approach it as a separate subject where they learn the rules of language so as to pass the tests and exams without any intention to link it for real life communication. This research tries to find out why most of the Sudanese high schools students do not have the ability to communicate fluently even though they are taught grammar since the earlier stages. A plethora of questions were addressed. It will also view other techniques used in teaching grammar and how does the teachers or instructor and learners interact with these techniques. It tries to fill the knowledge gap left by insufficient research-work in this area of the CLT approach in teaching grammar in Sudan. Fusion

of grammar and CLT is to be rethought from a Sudanese perspective in line with present context. A description of the traditional methods used in teaching grammar will be discussed so as to find out to the extent to which it affects teaching and learning grammar when compared with the communicative Approach. It also seeks to review the different elements which might enhance or hinders the effect of the communicative approach when used in the classroom environment, As well as the most important elements (teacher).

2. The Objectives of the Research

- 1) To find out the impact of the CA activities on the learners performance in relation to grammar.
- 2) To find out if the class size encourages/discourages the teaching of grammar through the CA.
- 3) To find out if learning styles play any role in enhancing the learners' attitudes towards learning grammar.
- 4) To raise teachers' awareness about the effective role the CA can play in pedagogy in general and in the teaching and learning of grammar in particular.
- 5) To find out if teachers are well trained to use the CA when teaching grammar.
- 6) To find out if government secondary schools are well equipped and have sufficient instructional materials to use when applying the CA.
- 7) To find out if teachers in secondary high schools prefer using the CLT Approach or the traditional approaches.

3. Questions of the Research

- 1) What is the impact of using the communicative activities such as role play, pair work, group work, scrambled sentences, cards etc on the learners performance?
- 2) How the number of students in class does encourages/discourages the teaching of grammar through the CA?
- 3) To what extent does negligence of learning styles affect the learners' performance when learning grammar?

- 4) What is the quality of the training that the teachers have received in order to be able to use the CA and to what degree are they aware of its importance?
- 5) How far are the Sudanese secondary schools equipped with instructional materials to use when applying communicative language teaching?
- 6) To what extent does the application of the CA in teaching grammar enable learners in producing grammatical and acceptable utterances in the language?
- 7) Which approach do the teachers in secondary schools prefer to use: the Communicative Approach or the traditional approach?

4. Findings

Finally, this study tried to find the effect of the CA on teaching grammar. The research population were 3rd year secondary high school students. Collecting the data needed for the research was done through the experiment in which the sample were divided into a(control/experiment) groups were they were given a (pre-post) test as well as a questionnaire for English teachers. The results summary obtained from the test and the questionnaire are revealed in the following statements;

The results of this study indicates that the CA has a very positive effect on the performance of the students. It also showed that the CA was more effective than the traditional methods.

The students performance improved as result of teaching them through the CA.

The analysis showed strong evidence that the CA has considerably enhanced the learning outcome of the students.

The CA has a great effect than the other traditional approaches.

Concerning the CA (88%) of the sample believe that this approach when used to teach grammar help in developing the learner to become a better communicator. The CA is used in most and not all Sudanese government schools. There is a great need to emphasize its advantages through many researches.

This approach needs sufficient instructional materials to ease its use in schools since it is affected by the scope it deals with.

(88%) of the sample believe that teaching grammar through the CA enables the learners to use the language outside the boundaries of the classroom effectively. It is preferred than other traditional approaches when compared with the (78%) responses who support the use of traditional methods.

Form the results seen from both test and questionnaire it is clear that applying the CA for teaching grammar in Sudanese secondary government school is of great benefit for developing the learners performance and improving his/her capability in communicating in real life and at the same time master the grammatical rules and approach grammar in a different way from the traditional method.

5. Conclusion

Grammar is a living resource that gives us the ability to communicate our ideas and feelings to understand what other people say and write to us. Teachers of EFL try to explore grammar teaching methods in different ways, so that they will approach it as an easy and interesting subject which will enhance them to communicate using the language freely. The results of this study indicates that the CA approach when applied in the Sudanese Secondary schools and supported with the needed materials has a very positive effect on the learners performance.

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