

A Comparative Study of Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Approach in Teaching English Language

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Abstract: The Grammar Translation Method and the Communicative Approach have both played important roles in English language teaching. Which is better, the Grammar Translation Method or the Communicative Approach? This paper aims to compare the controllability and feasibility of these two approaches and find out which one is more suitable for English language teaching in Bangladesh. College level students were selected (as the sample of the study) and taught them the Grammar Translation Method and the Communicative Approach respectively. The result, on the basis of these students, showed that Communicative Approach is far more significant than the Grammar Translation Method. Though this approach must have to go to the current proper utilization in context of Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the Grammar Translation Method emphasizes fluency of Grammar learning which enables the learners learning and expressing Communicative Approach wholeheartedly with accuracy. So the best way to improve the situation is to combine both methods in teaching English Language.

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Introduction

There can be no denying the fact that for learning and teaching any language method or methods are very much important. It is true that method or methods for learning and teaching language can be changed with the span of time but language can not be changed. It is universal. Guaranteeing the accuracy of the sentences mainly depends on the learner's mastery of grammar which is related with Grammar Translation Method, and it is an indispensable part of a language. So, it is important that the teachers and students have always attached with this method for teaching and learning. For the above-mentioned reasons, this method is effective, efficient and an important task for both English teachers and researchers.

Although college English teaching and learning research in Bangladesh has undergone great changes during the past decades. The current teaching English language in colleges is still characterized by the adoption of the traditional teaching method, which is known as the Grammar Translation Method. With this model, language structures are presented by the teacher, then practiced in the form of spoken or written exercises, and then used by the learners in less controlled speaking or writing activities. Although the traditional grammar teaching method helps improve the students' mastery of the grammatical rules, the students cannot use these rules flexibly and appropriately in communication. That is to say, the traditional grammar teaching method has its disadvantages which prevent the students from

developing their communicative competence. Firstly, the traditional grammar teaching method is teacher-centered. As a result, the majority of the classroom time is spent on the teachers' elaborate explanation of English grammar rules, while all the students are either listening or taking notes. Thus little attention is paid to the development of English communicative competence. The students accept the English knowledge passively in the procedures set ahead of time by English teachers step by step. There is little use of the English language. The typical exercise is to translate sentences from English into Bengali or vice versa, to fill in the blank with a proper word and to correct errors in a sentence. So the students lack English communicative opportunities. Secondly, memorization and rote learning are the basic learning techniques, which cannot help to arouse students' interest, build their self-confidence or improve their communicative strategies in English learning and even makes them fear English grammar learning. An alternative to the traditional grammar teaching method is the Communicative Approach. The Communicative Approach makes language teaching as in real-world situation. Where GT method emphasized on grammar learning for language communication, on the other hand Communicative Approach makes students' participation or co-operative completion of learning language tasks between or among students and teachers. As the above mentioned two methods are fully different from others, it is highly demanding to compare which

method is better than another one for learning English language.

The history of Grammar Translation Method

In the Western world, “foreign” language learning in schools was synonymous with the learning of Latin or Greek. Latin, thought to promote intellectuality through “mental gymnastics”, was only until relatively recently held to be indispensable to an adequate higher education. Latin was taught by means of what has been called the Classical Method: focus on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugations translation of texts, doing written exercises. (Brown, H.D., 1994) As other languages began to be taught in educational institutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Classical Method was adopted as the chief means for teaching foreign languages. Little thought was given to teaching oral use of languages. After all, languages were not being taught primarily to learn oral/aural communication but to learn for the sake of being “scholarly” or, in some instances, for gaining a reading proficiency in a foreign language. Since there was little if any theoretical research on second language acquisition in general, or on the acquisition of reading proficiency, foreign languages were taught as any other skill was taught. In the nineteenth century, the Classical Method came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method. Grammar-Translation Method began in Germany, or more accurately, Prussia, at the end of the eighteenth century and established an almost impregnable position as the favored methodology of the Prussia Gymnasien after their expansion in the early years of the nineteenth century. The origins of the method do not lie in an attempt to teach languages by grammar and translation, these were taken for granted anyway. The original motivation was reformist, the traditional scholastic approach among individual learners in the eighteenth century had been to acquire learners a reading knowledge of foreign languages by studying a grammar and applying this knowledge to the interpretation of texts with the use of a dictionary. Most of them were highly educated men and women who were trained in classical grammar and knew how to apply the familiar categories to new languages. However scholastic methods of this kind were not well suited to the capabilities of younger school pupils and, moreover, they were self-study methods which were inappropriate for group teaching in the classroom. The Grammar-Translation Method was an attempt to adapt these traditions to the circumstances and requirements of schools. Its principal aim was to make language learning easier. The central feature was the replacement of traditional texts by exemplary

sentences. Grammar-Translation was the offspring of German scholarship, the object of which, according to one of its less charitable critics, was “to know everything about something rather than the thing itself” (W H.D Rouse, quoted in Kelly 1969).

Communicative Approach (CA)

In contrast to the Grammar Translation Method is the “revolutionary” Communicative Approach, which shifts attention from language competence to communicative competence. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) originated from Europe, with the increasing interdependence of European countries in the 1960s. CLT spread into Bangladesh in the modern era, and has been applied in both advanced and fundamental education up to the present. Both American and British proponents now see it as an approach that aims to (a) make communicative competence as the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills. “The Communicative Language Teaching stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use English for communicative purposes and attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching” (Howatt, 1984). According to this approach, teaching and learning are for communication. It presupposes that language always occurs in a social context, and it should not be divorced from its context when it is being taught. Learning in order to communicate is now commonplace.

The background of Communicative Approach

In 1971 a group of experts began to investigate the possibility of developing language courses on a unit-credit system, a system in which learning tasks are broken down into “portions or units, each of which corresponds to a component of a learner’s needs and is systematically related to all the other portions” (Va Ek & Alexander, 1980). The group used studies of the needs of European language learners, and in particular a preliminary document prepared by a British linguist, Wilkins (1972), which proposed a functional or communicative definition of language that could serve as a basis for developing communicative syllabuses for language teaching. Wilkins’s contribution was an analysis of the communicative meanings that a language learner needs to understand and express. Rather than describe the core of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary, Wilkins attempted to demonstrate the systems of meanings that lay behind the communicative uses of language. He described two types of meanings: notional

categories (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location, frequency) and categories of communicative function (requests, denials, offers, complaints). Wilkins later reviewed and expanded his document into a book called *Notional Syllabuses* (Wilkins, 1976), which had a significant impact on the development of the Communicative Approach. The Council of Europe incorporated his communicative analysis into a set of specifications for a first-level communicative language syllabus. The threshold level specifications (Va Ek & Alexander, 1980) have had a strong influence on the design of communicative language programs and textbooks in Europe. The work of the Council of Europe; the writings of Wilkins (1976), Widdowson (1999), Brumfit (2000), Keith Johnson (1999), and other British applied linguists on the theoretical basis for a communicative or functional approach to language teaching; the rapid application of these ideas by textbook writers; and the equally rapid acceptance of these new principles by British language teaching specialists, curriculum development centers, and even governments gave prominence nationally and internationally to what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach. Although the movement began as a largely British innovation, since the mid-1970s the scope of CA has expanded widely.

Literature review

Previous Related Researches into Grammar Translation Method

The related researches are as follows:

Stern, H. H. (1992) in his book "Issues and Options in Language Teaching" indicates "a contrastive analysis, just as the comparative linguistics studies, is indeed very important for the second language learner. Therefore translation in one form or another can play a certain part in language learning".

Brown H.D. (1994), in his *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, states "It does virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language."

Cunningham, C. (2000) in the paper "Translation in the Classroom- a Useful Tool for Second Language Acquisition" indicates "while there may indeed be some negative effects from using translation, there is a place in the learning environment for translation. Translation can contribute to the students' acquisition of the target language, at all levels".

Austin J Damiani (2003) in his paper "The Grammar Translation Method of Language Teaching" states "As a teacher, I liked using the grammar translation method because I could assume the intelligence of my students; I could talk to them like the intelligent people that they are, and we could talk about the

grammar and vocabulary that I was teaching. In another method, I would have had to use simple language and familiar phrases to communicate in the target language, and even then, I could not be sure that my students knew and understood what it was that they were saying."

Previous Related Researches into Communicative Approach

According to Hymes (1972), competence should be viewed as "the overall underlying knowledge and ability for language which the speaker-listener possesses" (p. 13). That is, the concept of communicative competence involves knowledge of the language and the ability to use the knowledge in context. Communicative competence is a complex notion that involves linguistic as well as sociocultural sectors. From proposed definitions, it can be concluded that communicative competence consists of knowledge of linguistic rules, appropriate language usage in different situations, connection of utterances in a discourse, and strategies to cope with for the use of language.

Karava-Doukas (1996) suggests that the mismatch between the beliefs and practices may contribute to the neglect of examining teachers' attitudes before implementing any new approach. That is, only promoting the approach and trying to convince the teachers of the effectiveness of CLT does not successfully change the teachers' existing beliefs about language learning and teaching.

Razmjoo and Riazi (2006), Similarly, in their study would like to express that the teachers as a whole expressed positive attitudes toward the five principles of CLT. The teachers held strong views about CLT in the areas of grammar role and teacher role.

Karim's (2004) survey study examined university-level EFL teacher's attitudes toward CLT in Bangladesh. The findings showed that most teachers displayed positive attitudes toward the basic principles of CLT. He also interested to disclose, the teachers were aware of the features of CLT and their perceptions of CLT corresponded with their reported CLT practice.

Hawkey (2006), In Italy, applied both survey and face-to-face interviews to investigate whether teachers agreed with the advantages of the communicative approach in language teaching. The teachers stated positive views about CLT such as "CLT improving learner motivation and interest", and "CLT improving communicative skills" (p. 247). Through his research it is known that, teachers' interviews suggested that the teachers were motivated to use pair-work activities to meet the learners' communicative needs.

Liao (2003) investigated high school English teachers' attitudes toward CLT in China. The first-phase survey study reported most Chinese teachers are supportive of the implementation of CLT. The findings indicated that among 302 participants, 94% responded favorably toward CLT and were willing to practice it. In the second-phase interview study, four interviewees were selected from survey participants who displayed favorable attitudes toward CLT. The teachers expressed their agreement with CLT such as, "the teacher should take into account the students' need", and "the aim of the class is to enable students to communicate easily in real life situations" (p. 125). Chang's (2000) survey study in Taiwan investigated 110 high school English teachers' attitudes toward CLT and their practice of CLT. The results showed that Taiwanese high school English teachers hold positive attitudes toward CLT. Moreover, the teachers who hold positive attitudes toward CLT tend to use more communicative activities in their classroom practice.

Li's (2004) study of Chinese teachers' opinions at a tertiary level indicated that the teachers thought that learners must be given feedback when they produce L2 to modify their production. Since the students already knew how to negotiate meaning in their first language, what they needed to learn were words in order to use them in L2.

The interview data in Carless's (2004) study revealed that some students used the simplest linguistic forms to complete the tasks.

Burnaby and Sun (1989) reported that Chinese college students learn the knowledge of English for future jobs in China, such as reading technical articles or translation of documents.

This view is confirmed by Tsai's (2007) study. Taiwanese teachers also thought that EFL students have no immediate need to communicate in English. On the other hand, they need grammar and reading skills in order to learn content knowledge.

Widdowson (1999) says that "learners do not very readily infer knowledge of the language system from their communicative activities." "Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) values, among other things, learner-centeredness, which is, giving the learners more responsibility and involvement in the learning process. This is often achieved through discovery learning activities and through group work as opposed to the traditional teacher-fronted lesson. CLT also takes a relatively relaxed attitude towards accuracy in the belief that meaning takes precedence over form. Finally, CLT has inherited the humanist view that language is an expression of personal meaning, rather than an expression of a common culture. Such notions, it is argued, derive from very Western beliefs about education and language. Its

critics argue that CLT is an inappropriate methodology in those cultural contexts where the teacher is regarded as a fount of wisdom, and where accuracy is valued more highly than fluency" (Thornbury, S., 2003). The Communicative Approach has come under attack from teachers for being prejudiced in favor of native-speaker teachers by demanding a relatively uncontrolled range of language use on the part of the student, and thus expecting the teacher to be able to respond to any and every language problem which may come up. In promoting a methodology which is based around group and pair work, with teacher intervention kept to a minimum during, say, a role-play, the Communicative Approach may also offend against educational traditions which it aimed to supplant. The Communicative Approach has sometimes been seen as having eroded the explicit teaching of grammar with a consequent loss among students in accuracy in the pursuit of fluency" (Harmer J., 2003).

Statement of the Problem

The present research was designed to make A Comparative Study of Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Approach in Teaching English Language (Which is especially used at higher secondary / college level education) in Bangladesh.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- (i) To know the pros and cons of GT method (specially used in college level education in Bangladesh) for teaching English language.
- (ii) To know the pros and cons of CA (specially used in college level education in Bangladesh) for teaching English language.
- (iii) To justify which method is far better than another one in practical sense.

Significance of the research

For decades, English language teaching in Bangladesh has been greatly influenced by some traditional teaching methods, such as the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, and the Audio-Lingual Method. The Communicative Language Teaching or Communicative Approach was introduced into Bangladesh in the modern era. Fostering the communicative competence is its central goal. Communicative competence is concerned not only with what is grammatical but what is appropriate in a given social situation. Hymes (1972) proposes that language should be taught in communicative situations in order for learners to achieve communicative competence. Learners should

not only be equipped with language knowledge, but also be capable of appropriately using the foreign language in various situations. However, it has been gradually assumed among the scholars and teachers in Bangladesh that communicative competence makes the ultimate objective of English Language teaching, and the Communicative Approach, if completely and well conceived, does not involve the rejection of grammar. On the contrary, it involves recognition of its central mediating role in the use and learning of language (Widdowson, 1978). What English language teaching in Bangladesh counts is to make a good negotiation between the traditional and modern teaching method; to make a proper conception of communicative competence and develop a flexible communicative way to formal instruction in the classroom. What is called grammatical competence has been regarded as a significant component of learner's communicative competence by many linguists (Stern, 1992; Richards, 2004). In addition, the ups-and-downs of ELT in Bangladesh in recent decades has given us reflection on it. Many Bangladeshies scholars and experts have discussed and confirmed the possibilities of the combination of the Grammar Translation Method and the Communicative Approach and there is a growing comeback of the role of grammatical instruction in the classroom. Based on the notion of communicative competence and the significant role of grammar teaching, this paper aim to find out which one (Communicative Approach and Grammar Translation Method) is more suitable for teaching English language in College education in Bangladesh.

Methodology

The methodology of this research describes the location of the study followed by sampling procedures employed in the study, a profile of the informants, and method of data collection, instrumentation, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures.

Location and informants of the study: This research makes a comparative study between two methods like GT method and CA for teaching English language well. For this a number of colleges of south-western part of the country where Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat and Jessore districts were included as the location. The informants were first year and second year students of the different colleges. The research had both male and female informants.

Sampling and instrumentation procedures: The population of this research was college level students. A total of 88 students were selected as the sample for this research. The respondents were from the different colleges in four districts. The sample was

selected through a random sampling method. A total of 88 higher secondary level students were selected as respondents to whom the questionnaire was administered to collect data for this research. The questionnaire was prepared through English language. This research is descriptive and non-experimental. The research was based on primary data. The data were collected via the survey approach through a self-administrated questionnaire. This method was chosen because of the following reasons-

(i) this method is suitable for empirical research; (ii) the data collected through this method is easily quantifiable; (iii) this method gives informants enough time to provide well thought out answers; (iv) this offers greater anonymity to the informants; and (v) this requires low cost and saves time. The questionnaire was prepared by researcher in connection the research demands. In preparing the questionnaire, caution was exercised to ensure the standard and quality of the questions. The researcher was concerned about the validity, reliability, clarity, practicality, administerability of the instruments.

Data collection and analysis procedures:

Quantitative method was used to collect the data. The data was collected through a survey in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher himself. The questionnaires were distributed to the students of the colleges and requested them to return the completed questionnaires after answering. Upon completion of the collection of data, the data was edited, coded classified and tabulated for computation and analysis. The analysis was done using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) software. This software was used to examine and investigate about students' choice of answer through which the percentage values were obtained.

Data Analysis

Data collected were tabulated, analyzed, interpreted and presented in Table: 1 below. Percentage was calculated by using statistical technique for evaluation. The short terms which are used in the chart are described below:

SA = Strongly Agreed
A = Agreed
UNC = Uncertain
DA = Disagreed
SDA = Strongly Disagreed

Table:1

Questions	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. Do you think GT method is used at college level	36 40.91 %	23 26.14 %	7 7.95%	12 13.64 %	10 11.36 %

education?					
2. Do you think this Method is apt for learning English language?*	32 36.36 %	28 31.82 %	5 5.68%	14 15.91 %	9 10.23 %
3. Should this method be changed?	13 14.77 %	18 20.45 %	5 5.68%	29 32.95 %	23 26.14 %
4. Have Students idea to this method?	32 36.36 %	29 32.95 %	6 6.82%	13 14.77 %	8 9.09%
5. Can students use this method well?	27 30.68 %	32 36.36 %	7 7.95%	12 13.64 %	10 11.36 %
6. Is this method traditional?	26 29.55 %	34 38.64 %	4 4.55%	13 14.77 %	11 12.5%
7. Have teachers well trained in it?	23 26.14 %	28 31.82 %	6 6.82%	22 25%	9 10.23 %
8. Do you think that GT method is harder than CA for teaching English language?	23 26.14 %	32 36.36 %	9 10.23 %	14 15.91 %	10 11.36 %
9. Are you agree that CA should be changed for teaching English language?*	31 35.23 %	34 38.64 %	2 2.27%	11 12.5%	10 11.36 %
10. Do you think that the students should become effective communicators in the foreign language using CA only?*	21 23.86 %	31 35.23 %	5 5.68%	18 20.45 %	13 14.77 %
11. Is CA the most important factor by which language Performance should be judged?*	27 30.68 %	31 35.23 %	8 9.09%	18 20.45 %	4 4.55%
12. Are group work activities essential for communication and in promoting genuine interaction	18 20.45 %	33 37.5%	7 7.95%	19 21.59 %	11 12.5%

among students?					
13. Do you think that CA should be used in class room for teaching English language?*	22 25%	34 38.68 %	8 9.09%	17 19.32 %	7 7.95%
14. Do you think that CA is better than GT method for learning English language?*	17 19.32 %	32 36.36 %	4 4.55%	15 17.05 %	20 22.73 %
15. Is a comparative study between GT method and CA needed?	19 21.59 %	31 35.23 %	7 7.95%	19 21.59 %	12 13.64 %

Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Response towards the GT method and CA (N = 88)

1. In answer of the structured question "Do you think GT method is used at college level education?" majority of 40.91 % respondents strongly agreed with the statement and think that GT method is used at college level education

2. In answer of the structured question "Do you think this Method is apt for learning English language?" majority of 36.36 % respondents strongly agreed with the statement and think that this Method is apt for learning English language.

3. In answer of the structured question "Should this method be changed?" majority of 32.95 % respondents disagreed with the statement that this method should be changed.

4. In answer of the structured question "Have Students idea to this method?" majority of 36.36 % respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Students idea to this method.

5. In answer of the structured question "Can students use this method well?" majority of 36.36 % respondents strongly agreed with the statement that students can use this method well.

6. In answer of the structured question "Is this method traditional?" majority of 38.64 % respondents agreed with the statement that this method is traditional.

7. In answer of the structured question "Have teachers well trained in it?" majority of 31.82 % respondents agreed with the statement that teachers have well trained in it.

8. In answer of the structured question "Do you think that GT method is harder than CA for teaching English language?" majority of 36.36 % respondents

agreed with the statement and think that GT method is harder than CA for teaching English language.

9. In answer of the structured question “Are you agree that CA should be changed for teaching English language?” majority of 38.64 % respondents agreed with the statement and think that CA should be changed for teaching English language.

10. In answer of the structured question “Do you think that the students should become effective communicators in the foreign language using CA only?” majority of 35.23 % respondents agreed with the statement and think that the students should become effective communicators in the foreign language using CA only.

11. In answer of the structured question “Is CA the most important factor by which language Performance should be judged?” majority of 35.23 % respondents agreed with the statement that CA is the most important factor by which language Performance should be judged.

12. In answer of the structured question “Are group work activities essential for communication and in promoting genuine interaction among students?” majority of 37.5 % respondents agreed with the statement that group work activities are essential for communication and in promoting genuine interaction among students.

13. In answer of the structured question “Do you think that CA should be used in class room for teaching English language?” majority of 38.68 % respondents agreed with the statement that CA should be used in class room for teaching English language.

14. In answer of the structured question “Do you think that CA is better than GT method for learning English language?” majority of 36.36 % respondents agreed with the statement that CA is better than GT method for learning English language.

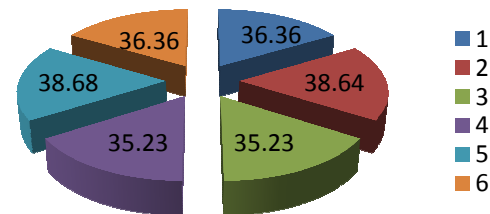
15. In answer of the structured question “Is a comparative study between GT method and CA needed?” majority of 35.23 % respondents agreed with the statement that a comparative study between GT method and CA is needed.

Results and Discussions:

Though 36.36% respondents were strongly agreed with the statement that GT method is apt for learning English language well, It is clear that this method is traditional (Though it helps learning and teaching English transparently) and it doesn't maintain all the functions like reading, listening and speaking for learning English language. So, a comparative study between GT method and CA was needed where most of the respondents were very much interested to remark that CA is appropriate for learning and teaching English language and it should be changed for teaching English language through

some instructions like a). The students should become effective communicators in the foreign language using in CA. b). CA will be the most important factor by which language Performance should be judged. C). CA should be used in class room for teaching English language and d). CA will be used pragmatically.

On the basis of the results and discussions (where twelve questions are structured) a pie chart can be drawn in the following way through taking the highest percentages of star (*) marked six questions-



Conclusion

It is true that without GT method, words hang together without any real meaning or sense. On the other hand, in order to be able to speak a language to some degree of proficiency and to be able to say what people really want to say, CA must be grasped. By teaching GT method the teachers not only give the students the means to express themselves, but also fulfill their expectations of what learning a foreign language involves. There are no miracles on the way to learn a language. Though students are taught grammatical concepts, syntactic constructions and stylistic devices, or language conventions and editing concepts, they will not automatically make use of these in their talking without CA. What this thesis intends to focus on is how to improve college students' English language learning between two methods. Based on the theory of the Grammar Translation Method, this research compares the Grammar Translation Method and the Communicative Approach. In order to prove the effect of the Communicative Approach, the author of this research makes an experiment on college level students. After few days' teaching practice, the Communicative Approach is proved to be a suitable and successful teaching approach for teaching English language (Foreign language).

Firstly, the learners in the experimental class made a significant progress in grammar learning, speaking English language spontaneously, reading and writing alike after experiencing some experimental classes. Secondly, learners with the

Communicative Approach in the experimental class made more progress than in the grammar learning class. Thirdly, the students' confidence in learning English was improved. Even those who lacked confidence in English in the past have become very active in the classroom activities. Be in the view of college students' actuality in Bangladesh, the best way to improve the situation is to combine both the Communicative Approach and the Grammar Translation Method in teaching English language. That is because the Grammar Translation Method emphasizes accuracy, where the Communicative Approach is concerned with accuracy and fluency which is the target for English language teaching.

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