

Developing Public College Students Reading Comprehension Skills through Communicative Language Teaching Method: An Experimental Study

Arbeela Memon

MS Scholar, SZABIST Karachi

Dr. Naeem Akhtar

Assistant Professor, SZABIST, Karachi

Syed Qaiser Hussain

Assistant Professor, SZABIST, Karachi

ABSTRACT

There is an on-going phenomenon witnessed that students at intermediate level do not enjoy reading due to lack of appropriate reading comprehension skills. This could be for many reasons but commonly this flaw is because reading comprehension is done firstly, on the basis of traditional methods adopted by the teacher who himself reads and explains in the class. Secondly, reading comprehension is conducted on Grammar Translation Method (GTM). Both of the approaches make learners boring and uninterested because their participation role is at minimum level. This research paper is an attempt to prove that students reading comprehension skills can be improved by introducing different strategies of teaching such as communication, participation in the class and by certain other integrated strategies. For this purpose, the research was carried on in one of the public college situated in Karachi. For this research to be carried out second year students from pre-engineering group were chosen for the study they were divided in to two separate groups and named accordingly as group(A) and (B). Group "A" was kept as controlled group. While group "B" was treated as the treatment group. An experiment was carried out through t-test. There were two tests taken one a pre-test and second was taken after the interval of five weeks and named as post -test to verify the hypothesis. After the experimentation it was proved that communicative language teaching methodology brought significant development among students reading comprehension skills.

KEYWORDS: Reading Comprehension Skills (RCS), Grammar Translation Method, (GTM), Communication Language Teaching Method (CLTM) Nine Steps Integrated Strategy T-Test, Pre-Test, Post Test, Traditional Teaching, SPSS. Group Activities, Interactive Class, Vocabulary Building

INTRODUCTION

There are diverse methods to teach English as a second language ESL or English as a foreign language (EFL). For this purpose, various course books or English language learning books are designed, and

recommended for students at different levels. There are many exercises given at the end of each unit to be practice on for improving functional English of students. These prescribed books if taught

with essence, efforts, skills, and appropriate methodology can help out drastically to improve students English as a second Language. Akhtar (2014) developed and experimented a six staged CLTM model and found it an effective method which can be used in Pakistan in teaching English language. This research paper focuses on improving public college students reading comprehension skills through communicative language teaching method, which requires students to involve and participate in the class through interactive communication method. It is pathetic to observe that English language teachers teach English subject as any other subject is taught. They are just concerned to complete the course by reading the text by them followed by Grammar translation method, and traditional methodology of rote learning.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The background of the study can be traced back to Noam Chomsky's theories in which he gave importance to competence and performance of language learning in 1960s. Though his theory was narrow and limited in its scope but from his advocacy of giving importance to language learning conceptual basis for CLT was established in 1970 by linguists Michael Halliday. Communicative language learning soon gained the ground due to two major reasons. 1) lack of success by traditional methodology of teaching. 2) Influx of people from all around the world to the European markets which had become the hub of economic growth. This increased population needed urgently to learn a foreign language.

This increased demand included the students who were struggling with language learning through Grammar translation method which required them years to get

adept and then use language practically. At that stage Educators realized and used CLT to teach students which gave immediate payoff by emphasizing communicative interaction in the classrooms.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is regrettably noticed that most of the public sector students after passing out their intermediate exam when get enrolled in the prestigious universities are unable to apprehend the course work. Students when enter at the higher education level are required to do lot of subject content work which is guided by the professors. At this level teachers are required to guide the students in the right direction and general lectures are given. Rest of the work which is totally dependent on the reading comprehension is supposed to be done and understood by the candidates by themselves. At the higher education level there is the huge burden of written assignments, there are group discussions and presentations as well, and all these tasks can only be accomplished through strong reading comprehension skills. This all exercise is very much essential to prepare the students for their professional careers. At this critical phase of their education and future planning students are seemed wandering, perplexed, psychologically depressed, and helpless. Because they are unable to complete their educational tasks which are assigned to them. At this stage somehow many students use the remembering technique and they qualify the examination. At this stage after getting triggered students get success which is indeed temporary. As they try to enter in their professional career through combined competitive exams they suffer extremely. Because such exams require extensive reading comprehension skills, which they utterly lack. As a result, students find

themselves frustrated and dejected because they do not qualify for their favorite profession. Hence they have to only accept what so ever they get. Looking at this major scenario and cause of student's failure at their critical stage of life researcher tried to conduct an experimental research on public college students to improve their reading comprehension through nine integrated steps along with (CLTM).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Q 1 At what extent communicative language teaching method (CLTM) is helpful and result oriented in the reading comprehension skills of students?

Q 2 What integrated steps are essential to improve students reading comprehension skills?

Q 3 How the role of teacher changes from an authoritarian towards a facilitator while using (CLTM)?

OBJECTIVES

1. To use practically CLTM as a better pedagogical way to teach English and improve the reading comprehension skills of public college students.

2 To make students of public college more interested and motivated for learning English as a subject.

3 To specially improve reading comprehension skills of students from the existing prescribed text books with the help of CLTM skills.

4 To revert teachers' attention from Grammar translation method (GTM) towards multidimensional utility of CLTM.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference in the mean score of public college students

performance in reading comprehension taught by conventional and communicative language teaching method (CLTM).

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Current practice of teaching English subject at Intermediate level through (GTM) and by teachers' typical methodology by just reading the text and completing the course without actively involving the students is not justified. Teachers target is only to make students pass the exam through memorizing without understanding the essence of the subject is also not justified. Students, due to lack of reading comprehension skills suffer at their professional careers. It is the need of an hour to adopt all the necessary measures to improve students reading comprehension skills. This is an experimental study to improve the reading comprehension skills through (CLTM).

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of communication language teaching method followed by nine steps of integrated strategy towards improving reading comprehension is bright. Through this methodology teachers would teach students in a more interested and interactive way. This method develops a set pattern of teaching and learning by maximum participation and involvement by the students. By this instead of getting bored and feeling alienated in the class they rather enjoy. This methodology can be widely used for different levels of students. That is from primary till advance level students. It's equally useful for all, provided practiced appropriately.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Being the English subject lecture in a prestigious public college Karachi, it is personally witnessed by me that by the way of Grammar translation method, reading comprehension never receives its place,

attention and practice in the class rooms. Therefore, this study is significant as it aims to use the latest practices of the world to teach students English as a language subject and to improve their reading comprehension skills significantly. As this approach of teaching is already successfully practiced as an effective way of teaching using it in Pakistan at intermediate level would produce quite significant results because students will not feel difficulty in their professional lives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicative Language teaching method was first introduced in England in 1970s. This method of teaching came forward as a revolutionary approach in Europe in 1970s in the field English Language learning in classrooms. It stood against the traditional methods of pedagogical learning as were practiced at that time (Galloway, 1993). In the context of the study, Akhtar (2014) has recommended to apply CLTM methods in teaching languages. According to (Li, 1998) communication language teaching method since its establishment as a methodology has been widely used throughout the world by many instructors in different ways in teaching English as a foreign language. It is disregarded by many language instructors as the most result oriented and useful approaches in teaching English. English Language teaching trends have been classified by (Richards in 2006) into three prominent stages since last 60 years.

Stage 1: from beginning till 1960 traditional approaches were used.

Stage 2: from 1970s to 1990 classic communication language teaching Approaches were used.

Stage 3: started from late 1990 till present in which current

Communicative language teaching is being used.

In 1998 (Mitchell and Myles) argued in favor of communicative language teaching and stated that success in the pedagogical learning is highly dependent to the extent on how meaning is negotiated in particular acts of communication. This view of language learning advocates exposure of communicative approaches of teaching English through communication since last few decades to improve learner's communicative aptitude. In (1986) the most obvious attribute about CLTM was presented by Larsen-Freeman according to him that almost everything that is done is done with communicative intent (Canale & Swain, 1986). Required from the language teachers the use and explicabilities of those skills and structure with the help of which language learners should understand the language structure and could use it as native speakers can. Taylor (1983) clearly advocated and demanded more class participation and performance from students. He said in the English language learning classes students must be given maximum chance to express their feelings, concerns, and experiences. They should communicate whatever they feel while learning a language. He further shifted the role of a teacher from an authoritarian towards a facilitator. Richards and Rogers (2001), take communicative method as an approach. Because it refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect communicative view of language

Savignys 1983 says that CLT-bases on students' one to one sessions with the teachers in which instructors teach them by interactive way and through their language proficiency and participation students are assessed. Brown quoted about Savignys

saying (2000:246) that communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved. In the language teaching communicative approach starts from a theory of language as communication. According to Kate Cain reading is much more than a single skill, it involves the coordination of a range of abilities, strategies and knowledge.

Communication language teaching with especial focus on reading comprehension skills was advocated by Adler(2001) for improving students reading skills he presented seven strategies. These strategies were the cluster of binding structures and techniques such as generating questions, answering questions, semantic organization, recalling story structures and overall summarizing the learnt concepts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purposeful study was taken up in one of the prestigious public college of Karachi (sindh). The aim of research was to analyze the extent to which this communicative teaching approach stands successful to improve the reading comprehension skills of the students. Quasi-experimental design was adopted as the type of research. For this experimentation T-TEST was opted as a test tool in the domain of quantitative research to test the hypothesis. Before the start of the experiment a pre-test was conducted from both of the groups namely A and B, to diagnose their reading skills ability by grammar translation method. The test was conducted with the help of English language teachers. The result of pre-test is shown in the tables in this paper through SPSS software. SPSS was used to verify pre-test results. Later on the both classes were taught with different methodologies to test the hypothesis. Group A was kept as

controlled group and was taught through traditional method of teaching. Whereas, group B was given treatment for 5 five weeks and taught by communication language teaching methods. Later on, a well-designed post test was conducted with the help of other English teachers. The results were collected and data was analyzed through SPSS which enabled the researcher to derive the conclusion and recommend the suggestions.

The ten steps strategy was used to implement communicative language teaching method during the experimentation by the researcher. These nine steps are discussed in this chapter to better understand the applied methodology and approach.

THE NINE STEPS INTEGRATION.

Following is the nine step integration strategy which is incorporated with the communication language teaching methodology (CLTM) in the class room for improving reading comprehension skills.

1. READ ALOUD

Reading aloud is essential in reading comprehension as it allows the reader to use both the audio and visual senses for better apprehension. it also comparatively takes more time which enables the reader to read carefully.

2. PRE-READ TEXT TO ENSURE UNDERSTANDING

It expects from the reader to re-read a sentence or paragraph again carefully and slowly for the second time if it has not been made clear in the first reading.

3. ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

Distractions negatively impact the reading comprehension. When any text is being read it is essential to eliminate all distractions to read it carefully, because it makes the reader to comprehend and understand what is being read.

4. BREAKUP THE READING INTO SMALLER PASSAGES

Reading is the foundation of all the knowledge be it subjective, objective, professional or democratic. It undoubtedly covers all the parameters to lead a successful life. For improving reading comprehension skills it is important to breakup large texts into smaller paragraphs and read at interval of time. For example after reading two paragraphs there should be group discussion on the same paragraphs for memory retention and understanding.

5. USE CONTEXT CLUES AND DECODING

Reading with context clues or by decoding the textual meaning with the help of other words which are familiar to you is essential where quick reading comprehension is required. Students in class can use this technique to understand the conceptual meaning.

6. GROUP ACTIVITIES

Reading comprehension becomes much fruitful and retentive when shared with others through oral communication or group activities; it merely remains a fragment in the mind if not made the shared experience. Group activities are the central essence of communicative language teaching method. It keeps students involved and engaged in the class activities, and students get maximum chance to participate in the class. Due to group activities class becomes more interactive, interesting and evolving.

7. VOCABULARY BUILDING

The rich vocabulary is the strong tool to explore, discover and search the world the stronger the vocabulary the better understanding of the world phenomenon. As the more a reader reads the more he enjoys the beauty of language. Vocabulary building

is the key tool to improve reading comprehension skills. Teacher can provide vocabulary building handouts in the class and teach students how to use and understand them with reference to its applicability of reading comprehension skills. Again these vocabulary handouts can be used in pairs or groups for fast outcome.

8. FEED BACK/SUMM UP

Feedback or sum up is the crucial part of any course learning. It is equally important for reading comprehension. Whenever any text gets completed it must be summed up by students. This would make them more involved throughout the class.

9. EXERCISES

Reading comprehension is much more than reading only words, the essence of reading increases when united with exercises. In almost all prescribed English books exercises are given to be solved. This could be regularly done in groups by the students to ensure students reading comprehend skills.

RESEARCH TOOL:

T-TEST was used as research tool in the research to test the hypothesis in the domain of quantitative research.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Quasi –experimental research design which comes in the paradigm of quantitative research was used in this research study.

SAMPLE

A sample of 120 students in each group were taken up as sample. They were further categorized as group A and named as control group. And group B and identified as experimental group.

POPULATION

The second year students of public college of Engineering section were taken as the population for the research study

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

PRE-TEST ANALYSIS

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Group Statistics						
	Group of Students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Scores of Students	Control Group(A)	120	50.61	14.81	1.35	
	Experimental Group (B)	120	51.06	14.44	1.318	

In control group A, a sample of n = 120 yielded a mean of 50.61 with a standard deviation of 14.81 and SEM of 1.35 whereas in the experimental group B, a sample of n = 120 yielded a mean of 51.06 with a standard deviation of 14.44 and a SEM of 1.31.

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	SED	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower Upper
Scores of Students	Equal variances	.44	.50	-.23	238	.812	-.45000	1.88	-4.17	3.27
	No Equal variances			-.23	237.8	.812	-.45000	1.88	-4.17	3.27

Table 2: Inferential Statistics

Table 2 illustrates that the t -test statistics yielded the hypothesis of test results. The pre-test group describes that F test has an insignificance p-value of 0.507 this signifies that there is no significant difference in the two groups' variance. An inverse t table value of -0.238 against the 238 df recorded a mean difference of -0.45 with standard error difference of 1.88. The 95% confidence interval also has a zero lying between the upper and lower confidence intervals supporting that the test is insignificant and there is no significant difference between the means of control and experimental groups. We fail to reject the null hypothesis.

DATA ANALYSIS OF POST TEST

Descriptive statics

Group Statistics						
	Group of Students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Scores of Students	Control Group(A)	120	51.2417	15.21664	1.38908	
	Experimental Group (B)	100	56.9500	10.49711	1.04971	

In post-test data analysis, for Control group A, sample mean of n= 120 is 51.2417 with standard deviation is 15.21664 and standard error mean is 1.3890 whereas in the experimental group B, a sample mean of n=120 yielded is 56.95 with standard deviation is 10.49 and a standard error mean 1.049.

Inferential statics table 2

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	SED	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Scores of Students	Equal variances assumed	23.16	.000	-3.174	218	.002	-5.70833	1.79851	-9.25	-2.16
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.27	211.00	.001	-5.70833	1.74110	-9.14	-2.27

post-test group describes that F test has a significance p-value of 0.000 this signifies that there is difference in the two groups. An inverse t table value of -3.174 against the 218 df recorded a mean difference of -5.70 with standard error difference of 1.798. The 95% confidence interval does not have zero lying between the upper and lower confidence intervals supporting that the test is significant and there is statistically significant difference between the means of control and experimental groups. So, we reject the null hypothesis.

From the above tables and data analysis it is evident that the experimental group B produced quite significant results after applying communicative teaching methodology. It is evident from the mean score and the result they have produced after (CLTM).

DISCUSSION:

Communicative language teaching method proved quite significant and effective when applied on the students of public college which were enrolled in engineering group. As the communication language teaching method focuses more on student's active participation in the English language class so it proved effective by explaining the text read and taught in the class which further ensured the reading comprehension of the students.

The measures which were taken to improve students reading comprehension skills were the integration of nine steps strategy which proved extremely beneficial and result-oriented. It required constant efforts yet the output was satisfactory.

By testing the hypothesis through T-Testing it proved to be a successful method to improve students reading comprehension skills. CLTM practically proved as an

authentic method to improve Reading Comprehension Skills in the English language classes in the public college. This also made students more motivated and interested towards learning English in class. Communication language teaching also shifted the role of teachers from authoritarian towards the facilitators as this tented more participation of the students in the classroom.

CONCLUSION:

Communication language teaching method /approach is regarded as the better way of teaching English with multiple dimensions. The success of this approach is highly dependent on the fact that it was adopted as the correct and effective way in British language teaching circles soon it was designed. It gained leading support and acknowledgement in British applied linguistics, language experts, and certified institutions such as British council (Richards 1985). This method when was applied to improve the reading comprehension skills of the intermediate students it revealed following findings from the data analysis.

1. Communicative language teaching method (CLTM) proved very effective in improving students reading comprehension skills. It gave significant difference in results when compared with grammar translation method.
2. Students were found more engaged, interested and enjoying the class environment because it gave them extensive opportunity to interact and participate in the class. As a result the more students involved in the class activities the better result was witnessed by them.
3. Communicative language teaching method was integrated with nine

strategies which produced extraordinary results in a very short span of time; as it kept students constantly engrossed and engaged in the class.

4. The response of the students when compared with Grammar translation or traditional methodology was also positive.
5. Communicative language teaching method improved students reading comprehension toward text and they became able to solve exercises and give feedback about their learning outcome.
6. There seemed improvement in student's vocabulary building and reading correctly when they were given focus on learning new words and made to read aloud.
7. Overall, it can be concluded that communicative language teaching method was really witnessed as the successful method in improving students reading comprehension skills in a drastic way in a very short span time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are few recommendations on the basis of findings of the study and conclusions:

- 1) It is the need of an hour to train the English language teachers to teach English as a secondary language rather than taking it as routine subject. There is big conceptual difference between English teaching and other subjects.
- 2) English focuses on semantics, phonics, grammar, vocabulary and language learning with rectification, whereas, other subjects are concerned with the concepts of what and how. Hence English must be taught with different approach.

3) CLTM has been widely used throughout the world as a successful approach and way of teaching to teach English as a second or foreign language. Therefore it should also be introduced and practiced in Pakistan at intermediate level to especially improve their reading comprehension skills and over all English language learning.

4) Teachers and students must be motivated to use the existing prescribed text books through (CLTM) and solve exercises for better understanding.

5) English language learning is the dire need of an hour; our all the textbooks at all the levels from pre-primary till higher education level are written and taught in English. Therefore all the necessary and successful measures must be adopted seriously and sincerely to improve our attitude towards it.

6) It is further recommended that more research should be carried out to bring more useful strategies to improve students reading comprehension skills in a still more effective way if possible.

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