

Exploring Communicative Language Teaching to Enhance Grammatical Knowledge among Secondary School Students in Bangladesh

Ummeh Rokaiya

Faculty of Educational Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

E-mail: GS60780@student.upm.edu.my

Norzihani Saharuddin, PhD (Corresponding Author)

Faculty of Educational Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

E-mail: norzihani@upm.edu.my

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Abstract

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) involves students in real-life interaction in order to improve their communicative competence. There are a lot of controversy about whether grammatical knowledge can be gained by CLT in the English learning process. This qualitative case study goals to attain the perspective and attitudes of students and explore the implementation of CLT in Bangladeshi Secondary School. Moreover, researcher aims to reach the gap which is emerged by the controversy. It attempted to find out the contribution of CLT in improving grammar knowledge among Secondary School Students in Bangladesh. Researcher investigated two research questions and examined two research objectives. Data was collected through semi-structured interview and an essay writing task from Dr. Khastagir Government Girls' High School, Bangladesh. The finding of study indicates efficient and feasible CLT activities are explored in the textbook which engaged students in collaborative

learning and meaningful interaction. Students have a certain perspective and an assured outlook towards CLT based classroom and they have a knowledgeable linguistic competence in writing. Besides, in acquiring communicative skills, fluency and accuracy were not attained equally among the students. Besides, students were aware of both in grammar knowledge and meaningful interaction but faced few obstacle in speaking. Accuracy activities of CLT facilitate to enhance grammar knowledge but a little lack was explored from the findings. To say, this study provides an insight on positive perspective of students towards communicative classroom settings.

Keywords: communicative language teaching, grammatical knowledge, accuracy, fluency

1. Introduction

In classroom activities and learning, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) refers to both processes and targets. According to Brown, 2002; Canale & Swain, 1980; Mochida, 2002, CLT's main purpose is to assist students in honing their communication abilities in second language through communication and interaction with others (Yousaf, M., Umar, H., & Habib, A., 2017). Wong & Marlys (2012) state that, since the middle of the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)'s concept has grown in popularity. Second language (L2) teachers have been encouraged to use communicative teaching methods in their classrooms since then. Richards & Rodgers (2001) suggested that CLT is better thought of as an approach rather than a method (Rahmatuzzaman, 2018). The communicative method is centered on communicative tasks and functions in the teaching as well as learning of languages.

CLT was entirely focused on meaningful engagement by incorporating spontaneous communication into group work and/or pair activities. Communicative competence, in addition, does not indicate that grammar teaching is not instructed, rather than grammar instruction leads to the capacity to communicate successfully (Masum, 2020). The function of grammar teaching in CLT is a contentious issue. For a long time, it was debatable whether we should teach grammar to teach the English language or if we should focus on communicative language instruction has been a point of contention (Rama & Agullo, 2012). However, according to Monitor Theory of Krashen's (1982, 1985), grammar instruction is superfluous and has a negligible impact on second language acquisition (SLA). CLT academics have been interested in merging form-focused instruction with communicative activities since the updated form of the Interaction Hypothesis of Long (Spada & Lightbown, 2009).

Since Bangladesh's independence in 1971, English has been required and mandatory subject of students at all levels of education, from elementary to postsecondary. After independence, Bangladesh's government used the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) for teaching and studying English (Roy, 2016). However, GTM was unable to facilitate students improve their conversational skills. As a result, in 2001, CLT was introduced in Bangladesh from grades six to twelve with the intention of achieving communicative objectives (Rahman and Karim, 2015; Shurovi, 2014). In Bangladesh, Communicative Language Teaching was successfully implemented into the curriculum in 2012 with the goal of promoting quality education that emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, and experiential learning (National Curriculum, 2012). CLT was introduced to Bangladesh with the goal of assisting pupils in improving their

English speaking abilities. However, the goal of implementing CLT in Bangladesh has yet to be achieved, as many students, even after twelve years of school, struggle to communicate effectively in English (Shurovi, 2014). According to Das et al., (2014), there is a significant gap between CLT's purpose and Bangladesh's present system of education.

After following the existing studies on teaching grammar in the setting of CLT, it became evident that enough studies had not addressed the implementation of CLT in grammar teaching and contribution of CLT to acquire grammar competence vividly. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate learners' attitudes towards the 'Communicative Language Teaching' method and explore how 'Communicative Language Teaching' facilitates learners' achievement of grammatical knowledge. To reach the aims of the study, researcher investigated two research questions which are:

1. What are the learners' attitudes towards the 'Communicative Language Teaching' method at Secondary School in Bangladesh?
2. How does 'Communicative language Teaching' facilitate learners' achievement of grammatical knowledge?

2. Literature Review

CLT is described as "An approach to foreign or second language education that stresses that the objective of learning language is communicative competence" (Richards et al., 1992). The major goal of circulating CLT is to facilitate language learners improve their conversational abilities and communicative competence. In the field of L2 /foreign language instruction, the communicative approach to language education is a relatively modern adaptation. Communicative Language Teaching, according to Brown (1994), is a coherent but widely grounded theoretical viewpoint with relation to the characteristic of language, language learning and language instruction. Language teaching strategies in communicative classrooms are aimed to involve students in pragmatic, real, functional language usage for meaningful reasons. Moreover, "Communicative strategies are based on the complimentary concepts of fluency and accuracy" (Brown 1994:245).

2.1 Grammar Knowledge in Communicative Competence

The primary purpose of CLT is to improve communicative ability and competence. Regarding communicative competence, Hymes (1972) pointed out that it encompasses not only the capacity to use grammatical efficiency in a range of communicative activities, contexts, and settings, but also the proficiency to utilize grammatical knowledge across a wide range of circumstances and contexts. The implicit and explicit understanding of the norms of grammar and knowledge of the principles of language usage is communicative competence (Hymes, 1972).

Richards (2001) claimed that, in Communicative Competence, grammatical ability relates to knowing how grammar is employed in communication. According to Canale and Swain in 1980, it is evident that "there appear to be no strong theoretical reasons for emphasizing getting one's message across over grammatical accuracy at the initial stages of l2 learning.

Several combination of emphasis on grammatical accuracy and emphasis on meaningful communication from the very beginning of the second language study is suggested." As a result, the point should be highlighted that Swain and Canale defined communicative competence includes grammar, implied that grammatical knowledge is part of a broader communicative competence. Others consider that grammatical awareness will come spontaneously through engagement in meaningful communication interaction (Mohib, 2016).

2.2 Learners' View towards Communicative Approach

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a learner-centered language teaching and learning approach. The role of learners in the CLT environment shifts from passive recipient to active participation in a variety of classroom tasks and activities that enhance communicative competence (Rouf & Sultana, 2018). In CLT classrooms, learners' perspectives play an important role in establishing communicative competence. CLT students, according to Larsen-Freeman (2000), are "communicators".

At both the international and local levels, few research have looked into learners' views toward communicative language acquisition. In a study named "Students' opinions, attitudes and perspective concerning the implication of Communicative Language Teaching to develop their English language hearing and speaking abilities" by Tinutda Komol and Sasitorn Suwanphathama (2020) explored the finding that pupils claimed CLT classroom tasks and activities to be beneficial as a complement to in-class instruction. The students understood that learning English language in this manner is appropriate. Furthermore, Hussein Islam Abdullah and Parilah Mohd Shah's (2015) addressed in their study titled "Students' preference for communication over grammatical knowledge" that the students have a very favorable attitude about the classroom procedures. Though they prefer communicative activities, they need not ignore grammatical rules since they understand how vital it is in learning a language.

2.3 CLT Implementation in Bangladesh

In the late 1990s, Bangladesh's Ministry of Education (MoE) made a dramatic variation in the concept of English Language Teaching, believing that the country's traditional language teaching method (GTM) was no longer up to the task of achieving the intended aim. Not only are new textbooks being introduced, but also a recent and new method to teaching English which is called Communicative Language Teaching (Mohib, 2015).

Many people have raised concern over Bangladesh's present CLT predicament. One of these problems is the fact that CLT in modern English curriculum in Bangladesh seems not appear to be effective when pupils are unable to speak effectively in English language (Kirkwood and Rae, 2011), despite the fact that CLT approach focuses to improving learners' communicative ability. CLT is not widely acknowledged by Bangladeshi instructors, and it is not widely applied in classrooms. According to Rahman, Sing, & Pandian (2018), traditional English instructors were first hostile to CLT because they were not prepared for anything that was completely fresh to them.

Furthermore, Bangladesh's education system is primarily to blame for CLT's failure. The

majority of examinations are geared to assess pupils' linguistic rather than communicative abilities. According to Das et al., (2014), there is a significant gap and differences between CLT's purpose and Bangladesh's actual education system. Furthermore, in Bangladesh, excessive number of pupils in one class has been seen as a crucial problem in CLT implementation. Sanders et al. (1997), on the other hand, are against the impact of class size on the ability to teach. Bangladesh's current Communicative Language Teaching condition is unsatisfactory, and existing English education is insufficient to enhance global communication (Karim, 2004).

3. Methodology

The case study was carried out by researcher utilizing a qualitative research technique. It is a research model derived from philosophy and psychology that is used to depict shared meanings of experience and expertise related to a topic and phenomenon (Creswell, 2016b; 2016a). This research was pursued on 20 students of grade nine from Dr. Khastagir Government Girls' High Schools at Chittagong city in Bangladesh.

3.1 Participants of the Study

As this is a qualitative study, there are a restricted amount of participants that can truly shed light on the issue and phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell, 2013). So, researcher involved 20 students who read in grade nine at a secondary school in Bangladesh where the participants are learning English as a compulsory subject in their class. Researcher utilized simple random sampling to pick up 20 participants out of 60 students.

3.2 Data Collection

To reach the research objectives and explore the answers of the research questions, researcher chose semi-structured approach to carry interviews (Kvale, 2007) and gave essay writing task to students. The semi-structured interview gives participants ample time and space to express their various points of view, while also allowing the researcher to respond to and follow up on incoming thoughts and emerging events (Nohl 2009).

10 open-ended questions were asked to the interviewees in the study. These open-ended questions were arranged based on first research question. These questions aided the researcher to investigate and identify the students' attitudes, thoughts and feelings regarding CLT. To achieve the finding of second research question, essay writing task was provided to the students to explore how CLT assists in attaining grammar competence at the Secondary Level Students in Bangladesh.

3.3 Data Analysis

In this qualitative study, the researcher collected data through interview and documents. As a result, researcher transcribed the data from interview and collect the writing copy to analysis. Simultaneously, researcher started coding to assign units of meaning. Coding is a method of categorizing or indexing a document in order to create a structure of thematic concepts about it (Gibbs, 2007). Data was categorized into theme and four themes were generated accordingly. Moreover, researcher utilized NVIVO software to do coding and thematic

analyze the data that was obtained from the instruments.

4. Finding

Here in the discussion, researcher includes two parts where the first part discusses about the finding from individual interview and second part offers the results and outcome of essay write up.

4.1 Findings from Semi Structured Interview

This qualitative case study implied a semi-structured interview where researcher inquires 10 open ended questions to the secondary school students and the questions are related to first research question about secondary school students' perspective toward CLT method. Besides, the theme was generated from the open-ended question under four major categories included grammar knowledge through CLT, CLT implementation in class, communicative competence and students' perspectives toward Communicative Language Teaching approach.

4.1.1 Grammar Knowledge through CLT

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) originated with the concept of stressing communicative competency over linguistic ability in the learners. In terms of the role of grammar, therefore, the fundamentals of CLT neither urge to overlook grammar. But there lies a controversy between the achievement of grammatical knowledge and communicative competence through CLT. In the interview session, researcher asked a question about the improvement of grammar knowledge through communicative language teaching.

From the responses, 13 students reported that most of the CLT activities are concerned with grammatical context. In the response of contribution of CLT towards grammar knowledge, one of the participant delivered the following statement:

“Throughout many CLT activities, we involve ourselves in various kind of exercises where we need to apply proper Grammar rules like proper use of tense in fill in the blanks, where we have to be conscious about the grammar rules. I think these kind of activities help us to enhance our grammar knowledge.....When we do any kind of mistakes during practice the exercise, our teachers give us feedback besides when we do group work, we get the information about the grammar rules from our friend as well. I also feel that there are so many activities which are based on grammar rules. It's my own opinion that CLT is useful to improve our grammar knowledge.”

Regarding grammar exercise, most of the students reviewed positively. They claimed that the text book of grade nine is arranged with various CLT activities which are adhering with grammatical rule and linguistic application. In addition, three students responded negatively and shed a light on the less contribution of CLT in improvement of grammar knowledge. On that side, one respondent mentioned that,

“I think CLT is more focused on speaking. So when we do speak in English language, we do not focus on grammar and structure. Teacher did not teach us specifically the grammar rules. So I don't think that it helps us to improve our grammar knowledge.”

4.1.2 CLT Implementation in Class

In English language learning, teachers apply various kinds of teaching strategies, Communicative Language Teaching is one the prominent one which aims to build students' communicative competence and emphasizes on both accuracy and fluency. In Bangladesh, the textbook is planned on CLT context. In the interview session, when researcher inquired about the lesson, every respondent responded positively. In response to this query one respondent said that,

“Our lesson is planned by CLT activities..... In our textbook, there are so many CLT activities, including pair work, group work, picture based activities, filling the blanks from the passage, etc.”

Another respondent included that

“In our class, our teachers follow our textbook. Every chapter is arranged by CLT activities.”

In this qualitative case study, researcher got a positive outlook from the informants where students were inspired, motivated and interested towards CLT based activities. On that respond, most of the students shared a certain view towards CLT activities. One of students uttered that,

“Our English teacher inspires us to do these activities, which is really interesting.”

Besides, rest of the six participants opposed on that context. From the converse view of CLT implementation in the class, one respondent reported that,

“Communicative language teaching method is not followed in our class properly. Some teachers follow CLT and some do not.”

To say, Brown (2001) states that the purpose of students is important in CLT environments because they are provided the chance of developing self-regulated learning which is centered according to their own learning strategies and tactics, whereas the function of instructors is peripheral, i.e. facilitator as well as a leader of learners' tasks. In the interview session, majority of respondents ensured about their independence in participation.

4.1.3 Communicative Competence

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) involves students with real interaction in order to improve individual communicative skills. On the respond to interview, students reported that Communicative language teaching approach provides an impactful learning setting where they can enable themselves in speaking and interaction in English language. In terms of asking question related language skills, 10 respondents mentioned that most of the CLT activities focus on communication skill. To emphasize the point, researcher puts a light on a respondent comment:

“I think it focuses on speaking language skill very much. Because throughout CLT activities we do communicate in target language more.”

In addition, there raised another query about fluency and accuracy in speaking skill through Communicative Language Teaching Method. According to the finding from interview, students claimed that majority of the students speaks English in their class but they faced obstacle and interruption in using grammar rules, vocabulary and pronunciation in speaking. Besides, in CLT classroom, activities like pair work, group works, dialogue discussion, engaged them in proper communication settings. Hence they practice speaking in English continuously though they face fear to be accurate. When they focus on accuracy on speaking, they cannot achieve fluency. On that basis, one respondent highlighted that,

“When I speak in English, I concentrate on my grammatical fact. On that time I cannot be very fluent in speaking. I think I do grammatical mistake in my speaking.”

Another one uttered,

“Sometimes my brain get confused about some grammatical issues while speaking.”

However, Emphasizing on the significant aspects of fluency and accuracy in communication, interaction and speaking, educators must pay a look on the execution of language activities.

4.1.4 Students’ Perspectives toward Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Students' attitudes, opinions, and ideas about English language teaching are crucial factors as they affect their dedication and tenacity in studying the language effectively. In the research, researcher aims to investigate learners’ attitude towards CLT method. On the interview response, it was found that, all respondents were aware of CLT application in class. Moreover, they shared a positive outlook toward this approach. Students explored that approach so effective and impactful. To enlighten the disclosure, here highlighting some comments of the respondents below:

One said,

“CLT based activity has helped me a lot to build up my knowledge in English language. I can exchange my thoughts and ideas with my friends and I get many ideas from my friends as well. And CLT based lesson is so impactful and effective for our language learning.”

Moreover, Researcher asked another question to inquire their view about the approach and clarify their thoughts and suggestion regarding CLT method application in class. On that repercussion, all respondents suggested to apply Communicative Language teaching Method in the language. According to their view, students sense boredom and monotony in their language class. They shared that when their class conducted through CLT method, they feel more motivated, encouraged and attentive for language learning. On that context, one respondent said that,

“CLT based class is going so active. We student enjoy the class when our teacher follows CLT method”

Besides, students’ motivations and enthusiasms were explored in some efficient CLT activities like pair work, group work, and picture related discussion and so on. From the

result of the interview, it is apparent a positive outlook of that secondary school students of Bangladesh towards CLT.

4.2 Findings from Essay Writing Task

In the qualitative case study, researcher took essay writing task from the participants to obtain data for the finding of second research question. In the study, researcher uphold second research question which is about to explore the way of learning and achieving grammar knowledge and linguistic competence through CLT approach. However, after taking the interview, researcher pursued collecting data from essay write up in the next day where previous 16 participants took part in the write-up task. Researcher provided ample time to write on a topic and the writing topic was selected with a usual context which is familiar to the students.

According to the findings of the research, majority of the students' write up were grammatically correct. In their writing task, it has been found that all the participants are fairly good in structuring sentences with correct tense usage, upstanding use of vocabulary, smartly maintain of coherence in sentence making and alignment. Besides, they have perfectly used parts of speech among sentences, right use of punctuation and right use of prepositions in arranging and executing their off-hand thoughts in write-up about the topic they have been given promptly by the researcher. In contrast, few of them have made mistakes in some issues related to present tense (3rd person singular), right use of verbs and using proper suffix-prefix in the sentences. The problems researcher has found in their write-up is not noteworthy.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Students' perception in CLT based classroom and the role of grammar knowledge in Communicative Competence are the major concerns of this qualitative case study. Researcher vindicated the positive and assured viewpoint of students towards CLT method. Moreover the textbook of Bangladesh secondary school arranged with efficient and feasible CLT activities which encourage students to devoted their mind and motivation towards learning. Besides, students were aware of both in grammar knowledge and meaningful interaction but faced few obstacle in speaking. Accuracy activities of CLT facilitate to enhance grammar knowledge but a little lack was explored from the findings.

This qualitative case study aimed to identify students' view and examine their attitude towards CLT implementation including contribution of CLT to enhance grammar competency. Based on the finding, some recommendation are comprehended below:

- There have a basic need to conduct the class communicatively with dedication. Teachers must provide a communicative environment to enhance collaborative learning.
- Teacher should emphasis on the obstacle that students are facing during communication. The lesson must be develop according to students' need.
- In the study, speaking is feared by pupils. They are hesitant to communicate or share their opinion in English due to a lack of vocabulary,

pronunciation issues, and a fear of being chastised for committing errors. So the teacher must focus on proper activities design and facilitate them to break the inactivity. Teachers must empower students to talk in English except for reservations.

- The accomplishment of learners and the development in instruction must be examined on a regular basis using various teaching styles and methodologies.
- Some directions for the communicative activities are presented in the present textbook. To encourage pupils to be more flexible and creative, instructors must follow these guidelines and exercises.
- The textbook EFT has to be changed in order to improve the communication capacity of Bangladeshi higher secondary students. Exercises for listening and articulation must be added to the book, as well as exercises for all four basic language skills must be similarly given.
- Both accuracy and fluency activities must be practice regularly.
- To carry the further research on that issue, it is recommended to pursue the study with quantitative approach to find and explore a vast perspective and view toward CLT. Moreover in the further research, researcher may interview teachers so that they can explore the thoughts towards CLT and find the obstacles of CLT implementation in language class.

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APPENDIX - A

10 open ended questions will be asked to the students to explore their perspective toward communicative language teaching method. These questions are related to first research question of the study.

R.Q 1: What are the learners' attitudes towards the 'Communicative Language Teaching' method at Secondary School in Bangladesh?

SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW: OPEN ENDED QUESTION

1. *Do you speak in English language in your class? Do you face any obstacle to use second language? Share your thoughts.*
2. *Are you taught through Communicative Language Teaching method?*
3. *Do you think your lesson is planned by CLT activities?*
4. *Which activities of CLT method do you get useful and interesting for your class? Why?*
5. *What is your opinion toward your CLT based lesson?*
6. *Do you think CLT can cover all four language skills? Give your opinion.*
7. *Do you find CLT method effective in your class? Share your view.*
8. *Do you find your interest in Communicative Language Teaching approach?*
9. *What do you think CLT is useful to improve your grammar knowledge?*
10. *Do you think CLT method brings effective impact in your second language learning? Should it be applied in your classroom?*

APPENDIX – B

Students will be instructed to write an essay with no time limit so that researcher can examine their achievement of grammatical knowledge and find the answer of second research question.

R.Q 2: How does ‘Communicative language Teaching’ facilitate learners’ achievement of grammatical knowledge?

- *Write an essay within 120 words on “The Impact of Covid-19 in Your Education Process”.*

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