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Analyzing the Effectiveness of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Employed on Undergraduate Students of Nangarhar University, Afghanistan

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Abstract

Although not widespread, English has a centuries-old presence in Afghanistan. In terms of academia, Kabul University boasts of having the first well-defined Department of English in 1923. The department focused on grammar, linguistics, spoken English, and phonology. Likewise, during the course of time, other universities adopted English as a teaching subject. The Department of English at Nangarhar University started working in the year 2003. Currently, English as a TEFL degree is taught to more than 400 undergraduate (UG) students hailing from diversified backgrounds. The current study is an earnest attempt to assess the pedagogy adopted in English Language Teaching (ELT) at Nangarhar University. Though the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are adopted and applied at various levels, this research is a unique investigative attempt of its kind to analyze which method is more effective and result-oriented. The study used a quantitative research method, employing a survey questionnaire. A total of N=74 students and teachers participated in this research from the Department of English, Nangarhar University, Afghanistan.

Keywords: ELT, UG students, Nangarhar University, GTM, CLT

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1. Introduction

The withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the downfall of the Taliban Regime in 2001, and the arrival of a new government funded and supported by the international community is a new chapter where English has enjoyed the most prestige (Alamyar, 2017) in what is called Kachru's expanding circle (Kachru cited in Crystal, 2003) in Afghanistan is unprecedented. From 1985–2004, English was taught as a subject starting from grade seven, but today English is taught from fourth grade (Ministry of Education, 2017) till university, so English is a compulsory subject within the school and university curriculums. Keeping the growing importance of English in the education policy of Afghanistan in mind, it is important to note that Nangarhar University

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established an English Department in 2003 and currently more than four hundred students study Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) as their major, hailing from diversified backgrounds.

Both learning and teaching are important factors in education, which cannot be separated, and they depend on each other (Forest, 2004). Both of the mentioned factors require appropriate selection of methods and techniques of teaching (Shabani, 1995) and the way they are practiced, a "teaching style" (Knowles, 1970) that leads to productive and outcome-based learning (Knowles, 1970; Baghaie and Atrkar, 2003). Many scholars in the field accept that there is always an impact of teaching methods on learning (Miglietti and Strange, 1998), in addition to the right selection of materials (Nunan, 1999) and needs analysis of learners (Savignon, 2007). Prabhu (1990) says that there is no best method for teaching. He does not mean that we should throw all methods out the window. He stated, "... what is best depends on who the method is for, in what circumstances, for what purpose, and so on" (Prabhu, 1990), so pedagogy is always a critical discussion and the role of the teacher in teaching their learners is highly significant. GTM, as a classical approach, and CLT, as a widely accepted approach, are the main streams of teaching English at Nangarhar University. Richards (2006) explains that GTM is used to develop grammatical competence while CLT is utilized to develop the communicative competence of learners.

2. Literature Review

Applied linguistics is the discipline related to language learning and teaching. As a result, the field has seen several methods emerge in different eras to meet the specific goals (Fereidoni et al., 2018). According to Freeman and Anderson (2011), the term "method" means a coherent set of links between the actions of a teacher in a classroom and the thoughts that trigger the actions. Here, the actions are the technique and the thoughts are the principles. GTM was originally developed in the 1500s specifically for teaching Greek and Latin languages, which mainly focused on teaching reading and classical text writing (Rivers, 1981; Freeman and Anderson, 2011) and translating them into their native language (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Besides this, GTM as one of the very first methods was developed in the late nineteenth century for the teaching of modern languages (Rivers, 1981), which was based on structuralism, behaviorism (Brown, 2007), and the mechanical habit formation theories (Richards, 2006). It was also the most popular teaching method in Europe from the 1840s to the 1940s (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) and was widely used until the twentieth century. However, as an inadequate method, it was criticized by scholars (Zimmerman, 1997; Coady and Hukin, 1997) who have paved the way to CLT (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Robert Langs in the 1970s developed the CLT (Richards, 2006). The theory of communicative competence introduced by Hymes (1971; 1972) and multi-functional theory by Halliday (1975) were the supporting and guiding theories for the foundational development of CLT.

Moreover, methods were developed for specific purposes, and these purposes became the guiding principles for them (Asl, 2015). Here, both GTM and CLT travel on the same route in order to fulfill two different purposes, which are grammatical competence and communicative competence of learners (Richards, 2006). These principles pertaining to GTM and CLT are: (1) In GTM, students are taught to translate from native language to the target language, grammar is taught deductively, and students memorize native language equivalents for the target language vocabulary whereas in CLT, "everything is done with the communicative intent" where students use the language through communicative activities such as games and role plays, "communication is purposeful", the authentic materials are used, "activities are often carried out by students in small groups" and grammar is taught inductively (Freeman and Anderson, 2011). (2) In GTM, the role of the teacher is traditional, the authority in a class where students are passive. In this sense, students learn what their teacher knows to teach them, while in CLT, the teacher is the facilitator of the entire session where students become more active participants (Freeman, 2010). (3) In GTM, there is no principle related to the handling of students' feelings and emotions. However, in CLT, students are motivated by individual opportunities for class participation, and students' security is enhanced by cooperative interaction (Freeman and Anderson, 2011). (4) In GTM, the native language is used as an instrument of translation for the meaning of the target language, while the native language is rarely used in CLT (Freeman and Anderson, 2011). (5) The emphasis on grammar and vocabulary and reading and writing as important skills is focused in GTM, but in CLT, students work on four integrated skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) from the very beginning (Freeman and Anderson, 2011). (6) In GTM, there is immediate correction of the errors of students by the teacher, while in CLT, students' errors are tolerated in terms of fluency, and the teacher notes the errors and returns to them once the accuracy-based activities have begun (Freeman and Anderson, 2011).

In terms of application, a study was conducted to compare the controllability and feasibility of GTM and CLT in order to find out which one of them is more suitable for teaching grammar in Taiwan. The findings show that grammar teaching in the framework of GTM is better than CLT. Nevertheless, the CLT emphasizes more on fluency and the GTM focuses on accuracy. In this case, fluency and accuracy are both important for learning English, so the best way to improve the situation is to combine both methods in teaching English grammar (Chang, 2011). Another study conducted on teaching English to the students of medicine in Iran found a significant difference in students' perception between the GTM and CLT, specifically in the presentation of the contents. In this connection, students had positive attitudes towards deductive and teacher-centric learning. However, it is stated that CLT is recommended by many scholars as a useful teaching method, but it was not recommended in some cases by medicine students at Urmia University of Medical Sciences (Fereidoni et al., 2018). Finally, a more related and specific study conducted on the effects of English teaching methods on secondary English teachers in Kabul, Afghanistan shows that GTM and other traditional methods have been widely practiced, which has made it difficult for students in Afghanistan to develop strong communication skills (Hikmat, 2009).

3. Methodology

The nature of this study is quantitative in nature. Responses were gathered from the population of English teachers and students (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) at Nangarhar University's Department of English in order to compare the effectiveness of ELT methods used on undergraduate students in this department, which primarily employs GTM and CLT. A sample size of N=74 students and teachers out of approximately over 400 population size technically calculated by the Automatic Sample Size Calculator Raorsoft was chosen for this purpose. A self-designed survey was used as a method of data collection (Chang, 2011; Fereidoni et al., 2018). The survey has two parts. Part one is about the demographic information of participants, including their age, gender, and designation. Part two contains eight multiple-choice questions regarding their perspectives and attitudes on the effectiveness of ELT methods, particularly GTM and CLT. The study is intended to test the following hypotheses:

H_0 : CLT in the context of Afghanistan in general and at Nangarhar University in particular is not a result-oriented methodology.

H_1 : CLT in the context of Afghanistan in general and at Nangarhar University in particular is a result-oriented methodology.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings and discussion of the data from a survey questionnaire to analyze the effectiveness of GTM and CLT in the context of Nagarhar University. Findings in the form of percentages are presented through organized tables. The research hypotheses in the current study have been addressed using descriptive analysis and interpretation.

4.1. Demographic Findings

Participants in this study are in the age range of 18–45 years old. Among them, 81% are male and 19% are female. 55% are fourth year (senior) UG students, 15% are third year (junior) UG students, 5% are both first and second year (freshmen and sophomore) UG students, and 25% of the study participants are Assistant Professors who are the permanent English teachers at Nangarhar University. This is shown in Table 1.

Gender	Percent (%)	Qualifications	Percent (%)
Male	81	4 th year UG students	55
Female	19	3 rd year UG students	15
Neutral	0	1 st & 2 nd year UG students	5
Total	100	Assistant Professor	25
		Total	100

4.2. Descriptive Findings

Responses from 74 participants of the study are organized under nine major themes, which are: the frequently employed teaching methods; assurance of feedback and classroom participation/interaction; practicality of method; method that ensures effectual fluency; communicability and presentation of content, easy adoption and application; emergence of result-oriented methods; and the recommendation of other approaches/methods besides GTM and CLT. Hence, the findings for each of the mentioned major themes are discussed as follows.

First, 58% of survey respondents named GTM as the most frequently used teaching method on undergraduate students at Nangarhar University’s Department of English. However, 42% selected CLT as the most frequent method of ELT. This signifies a relatively equal balance between the GTM and CLT. Therefore, it can be said that both of the methods are the most frequently employed methods for teaching English at the mentioned institution (Table 2).

Table 2: Most Frequent-Employed Teaching Method(s) at Nangarhar University	
Teaching Method	Percent (%)
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	58
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	42
Total	100

Secondly, to find out which method ensures effective feedback and encourages democratic participation in the classroom, a significant majority of 89% of the survey participants selected CLT, while 11% of the participants selected the GTM, so the research found a layer of understanding among the students and teachers of this department in terms of feedback and class participation. It also implies that there has been a congruity among the instructors and students to conduct classroom sessions using CLT (Table 3).

Table 3: Method(s) that Ensures Effective Feedback and Encourage Democratic Classroom Participation	
Teaching Method	Percent (%)
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	11
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	89
Total	100

Third, in terms of practicality, a significant high majority 88% of the participants in this study selected CLT, while 12% of the research participants selected GTM as a practical teaching method (Table 4). Therefore, it is found that both the common theoretical account of CLT in terms of practicality and the contextual analysis of the study go on the same route. For instance, in GTM, students are usually passive learners, while in CLT, they are active learners, and the instructor acts as a facilitator.

Table 4: Teaching Method(s) involving more practical approach towards language learning	
Teaching Method	Percent (%)
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	12
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	88
Total	100

Fifth, a remarkable majority of 86% of the participants in this survey chose CLT that covers more classroom interaction, which enhances the efficiency of ELT like reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Only 14% of the participants selected grammar translation as a method that could ensure classroom interaction (Table 5). The study discovered that both teachers and students in the English Department at Nangarhar University

understood the significance of classroom interaction in achieving sufficient fluency and proficiency in the target language.

Table 5: Teaching Method(s) Covering More Classroom Interaction	
Teaching Method	Percent (%)
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	14
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	86
Total	100

Sixth, a considerable high majority 85% of the study participants selected CLT, which ensures effectual fluency when it comes to language learning, while 15% of the participants in the study opted for GTM (Table 6). The study also found that in order to fulfill the needs of students, both in terms of fluency and accuracy, there should be a balance in utilizing the GTM and CLT. Hence, both accuracy and fluency are the main language areas to be mastered.

Table 6: Teaching Method(s) that Ensures Effectual Fluency	
Teaching Method	Percent (%)
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	15
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	85
Total	100

In order to ensure which among the GTM and CLT grantees more effective communicability and presentation of content, a great majority (88%) of the participants in this study selected CLT while only 12% selected the GTM (Table 7). Therefore, it was found that specifically in the context of Afghanistan, developing communicative competence will be better handled by CLT because previous studies, for instance, Hikmat (2009), also found that teaching through GTM and other traditional teaching methods has made it difficult for Afghan learners to acquire effective communication skills. In this connection, the researcher's personal teaching experience at the Department of English at Nangarhar University also confirms that students are good readers and writers, but they often fail to have good English conversations.

Table 7: Teaching Method(s) that Guarantees Effective Communicability and Presentation of Contents	
Teaching Method	Percent (%)
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	12
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	88
Total	100

Besides this, the research did not find any significant difference between the GTM and CLT in terms of their application and adaptation. Therefore, 51% of the research participants selected CLT to be easily applied and adopted, and 49% of the participants selected GTM as an easy method for implementation (Table 8). From this,

Table 8: Teaching Method(s) that Seems Easier to Apply and Adopt	
Teaching Method	Percent (%)
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	49
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	51
Total	100

the research infers that there is a potential within Afghan English teachers and students to cope with various methods, which is a sign of further improvement in the methodology of ELT.

Which method is effective in teaching any target language is always a big question mark, both for the curriculum and syllabus designing specialists and the instructors, who are the front line implementers. It is even a point of consideration among the students of the 21st century to know what method they are taught with. Hence, 75% of the participants in this study selected CLT as a more result-oriented approach. However, 15% of them selected GTM as a result-oriented method when it comes to language learning (Table 9). It is understood from the findings that CLT, similarly in the context of Afghanistan, is a more outcome-based teaching approach.

Table 9: Result-Oriented Teaching Method(s)	
Teaching Method	Percent (%)
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	15
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	75
Total	100

The research question in this part is specifically intended to explore the perceptions and attitudes of both students and teachers of the Department of English at Nangarhar University, if they agree to adopt and utilize other approaches and methods besides GTM and CLT as the most frequently employed teaching methods in this institution. So, a significant high majority (96%) of the participants of the survey agreed regarding the statement that English teachers at Nangarhar University must adopt other ELT methods besides the two approaches (GTM and CLT). However, a tiny percentage show neutral, disagreement, or strong disagreement. From the mentioned analysis, it reveals that there is a potential for acceptability and adoptability of other effective approaches and methods by the teachers and students of this department (Table 10).

Table 10: Students and Teachers' Perceptions on Adopting Various ELT Methods Besides GTM and CLT	
Perceptions	Percent (%)
Strongly Disagree	4
Disagree	
Neutral	
Agree	39
Strongly Agree	57
Total	100

The study finally found that half of the participants (50%) of the study recommended the post-method era to be adopted for effective ELT within the context of Nangarhar University. Affective humanistic approach is number two, which was recommended by 42% of the participants in the study. The cognitive approach (35%), the audio-lingual method (34%), the reading method (33%), the direct method (33%), and the lexical approach (13%), are in the subsequent recommended positions respectively. From these statistics, it is found that teaching staff at the Department of English must adopt other teaching approaches and methods besides GTM and CLT (Table 11). It is also understood that GTM and CLT, which are the most commonly used methods on undergraduate English students at Nangarhar University, cannot meet the needs of the students in terms of various learning styles and effective lesson outcomes. Therefore, there is a need to change the trend from GTM and CLT to a more eclectic way of teaching. It is worth mentioning that participants in this particular research question could choose more than one option that applies.

Teaching Approaches and Methods	Percent (%)
Post Method Era or Eclectic Approach	50
Affective Humanistic Approach	42
The Cognitive Approach	35
The Audio-lingual Method (ALM)	34
Reading Method	33
Direct Method	33
The Lexical Approach	13

5. Discussion

The current study analyzed the effectiveness of GTM and CLT employing undergraduate students in the Department of English at Nangarhar University. The main objective of the present study was to comparatively analyze the implementation of both GTM and CLT in the context of Afghanistan. Therefore, two research hypotheses guided the present study. The null hypothesis (H_0 : *CLT in the context of Afghanistan in general and at Nangarhar University in particular is not a result-oriented methodology*) has been rejected while the alternative hypothesis (H_1 : *CLT in the context of Afghanistan in general and at Nangarhar University in particular is a result-oriented methodology*) has been accepted after statistically analyzing the survey data. Both GTM and CLT have been analyzed in terms of nine major themes, which are: the frequently employed teaching methods; assurance of feedback and classroom participation/interaction; practicality of method; method that ensures effectual fluency; communicability and presentation of content; easy adoption and application; emergence of result-oriented methods; and the recommendation of other approaches/methods besides GTM and CLT.

The findings revealed that CLT received a remarkable high percentage of positive responses to the mentioned major thematic areas, except the two major themes where findings are similar for both GTM and CLT. For instance, both GTM and CLT are frequently employed teaching methods in the context of Nangarhar University, with a percentage value of GTM=58% and CLT=42%. In terms of application and easy adaptation, the study further found a quite similar result for both GTM=49% and CLT=51%.

6. Conclusion, Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The Department of English at Nangarhar University, which was established in 2003, is the second-renowned school of English language and literature in Afghanistan after the Kabul University English Department. The department at present Teaches English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) to more than 400 undergraduate students in addition to teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) across the various disciplines (i.e., medicine, engineering, journalism and mass communication, policy and public administration, etc.). The current study discovered GTM and CLT to be the most commonly used ELT methods on UG students majoring in English, though the study aimed to evaluate their effectiveness in various aspects of learning (i.e., effective feedback and classroom participation; practicality; classroom interaction in target language; enhancing fluency; presentations of contents; applicability and adaptation; and result orientation). Keeping the mentioned areas of language learning in mind, the statistical analysis of the study found CLT to be a more result-oriented method of ELT. In this connection, the null hypothesis is rejected, so the alternative hypothesis is accepted. However, both CLT and GTM share the same border in terms of applicability and adaptation ease. Besides this, the study also shows that a remarkable high majority (96%) of the participants of the survey had a positive attitude towards adopting other teaching approaches and methods (i.e., post-method era 50%, humanistic approach for instance, community language learning, 42%, the cognitive approach, 35%, audio-lingual method, 34%, reading method, 33%, direct method, 33%, and the lexical method, 13%).

The present study is a quantitative analysis and is limited to Nangarhar University, the second largest public institution of higher learning in Afghanistan, but for more effective and wholesome results, it is suggested that future researchers may conduct similar studies (both quantitative and qualitative) in other major universities in Afghanistan.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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