

CLTA or GTM: Problems faced by the English teachers at undergraduate level

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Abstract : *Teaching English to the students of other department at undergraduate level becomes an undeniable challenge through the application of GTM (Grammar Translation Method) and CLTA (Communicative Language Teaching Approach). This paper deals with the confusions of applying a particular method in teaching English in Bangladeshi context. CLTA as a modern and recent acceptable teaching approach concerns with the interactive functions of language; on the other hand, GTM is considered a bit older method to teach the structure of the language. The way it is trying to admire CLTA as stating modern and denying GTM as old-fashioned is not so easy to adopt. So, problems take place in different levels; teaching/learning strategy, methodological point of view, classroom drill, teacher-student relationship and so on. This paper also provides the feasible explanations of being the divergence of these two methodologies and the ongoing challenges in classroom which are faced by the teachers at undergraduate level.*

Keywords: *ELT, Grammar Translation Method, Communicative Language Teaching Approach, Teaching English to other Department Students*

Introduction

Teaching profession is always challenging, especially when it is concerned with the teaching of a non native language. English Language Teaching is a challenge for the Bangladeshi teachers specially focusing on a particular ELT methodology at classroom. The limitations and pedagogical deficiency of Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA) and Grammar Translation Method (GTM) or other ELT methodologies cause these disputes regarding teaching English at undergraduate level.

The objective of learning English was to achieve the capability of reading and comprehending the literature of the target language in the ELT situation of Bangladesh.

What the students actually used to learn was the culture of English language presented via the literature. In GTM literary texts were taught to familiarize the learners with the target language culture which is one of the prime conditions of second language acquisition. McArthur (1996) locates Bangladesh in the ESL territories. However, he said elsewhere that in Bangladesh, English is neither a

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Second Language nor a Foreign Language[1]. Whatever it is; GTM was the solution for Bangladeshi ELT situation since the British era in the country. The learners used to learn English through the rules of English grammar followed by the application of those rules in translating isolated sentences and parts of the given text from the first language to the target language of the learner which was a fear situation for both learner and teacher. Both felt certain burden about the accuracy from morphological and syntactic point of view.

Over the decades, language teachers and others concerned with language teaching have been puzzled with different dimensions of methods and approaches to language teaching. And in the year 1998-1999 CLTA was introduced in the education system of Bangladesh to enable the learners to use English in their real-life situation which replaces a long-practiced method, GTM in Bangladesh. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) revised the communicative syllabus and textbooks to implement CLTA for classes 6-12 (NCTB, 1996)[2] However students at undergraduate level are still found far away from expected levels of competency in communication.

The need for learning English as Second Language (L2) emerges in Bangladesh from the necessity of communication in the international arena. The origins of CLTA can be traced in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960's (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). The rapid acceptance of this new principle by British language teaching specialists, curriculum development centers, and government gave prominence nationally and internationally to what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach or simply Communicative Language Teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) [3]. The CLT approach views language as a tool for communication. The philosophy of CLTA is to characterize all the underlying abilities that speaker possesses in order to communicate.

This view of CLTA was to make learners, teachers and language practitioners as solely draw near to converse in the everyday life situation. Inconsistencies were found in the classroom implementation of the newly decided approach. Emergence of CLTA in a conflicting mood with GTM put the teachers into dilemma who did not find any place & time to be acquainted with this new decision and practice. The teachers do not find the proper way to deal at the classroom. The sharp shifting from GTM to CLTA put them into incompatible situation.

Objectives of the study:

The general objective of this paper is to find out the problems faced by the teachers in teaching English at undergraduate level by applying the CLTA and GTM in Bangladeshi context. There are some other objectives of this study, which are given below:

- a. To find out the shifting situation from GTM to CLTA
- b. To realize the impact of the previous, long-practiced GTM in present situation

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- c. To focus on the conflicts of implementation of CLTA or GTM and their classroom activities
- d. To expose the contradiction between CLTA and GTM
- e. To suggest some probable solutions of the problems which are faced by teachers through this ongoing conflict between CLTA and GTM

Literature Review

English language teaching or ELT coins about different types of methods through which the non native speakers can technically comprehend the English language and use it in their educational purposes as well as in practical life. Willga M. Rivers in *Teaching Foreign Language Skills* (1968) observed four classrooms and identified four different methods by the classroom activities; the Grammar Translation Method, Reading Method, Direct Method and the Audio-Lingual method[4]. The objectives of four classes are different as the teacher instructed their students. In Bangladesh, the Grammar Translation Method was the early method and it stressed on the grammatical accuracy and sentence structure Later, the teaching approach was converted into communicative language teaching approach. Another linguistic theory of communication of CLT is cited in Halliday (1970) as the functional account of language asserted that linguistics is concerned with the functions of language where the meanings are brought into focus [5].

Our English syllabus at undergraduate level is mostly designed on the basis of communicative language teaching approach. Dr. Binoy Barman, Bijoy Lal Bashu and Zakia Sultana (2006) extol about the Communicative Language Teaching Approach in order to communicate and interact to learn a language [6]. With the upgrading and modifying tactics, repetitive drills of interaction through communication, the CLTA get the shape of practicality. Widdowson (1978a) asserted that communicative language encourages the students to do more linguistic function [7]. It supports the idea of communicative competence and linguistic competence. But, distinctive classroom drills along with the adoption of a particular method create hindrance in proper teaching.

Research Methodology

The author(s) of this paper followed a qualitative study approach and all the data analysis procedure is also qualitative. The study of this qualitative work is carried out over thirty teachers of different public and private universities, who are involved in teaching English at undergraduate level students. The author(s) acknowledges the gratitude to the English teachers of Dhaka University of Engineering & Technology (DUET), Prime University, University of Information Technology & Sciences (UITS), Bangladesh University of Business & Technology (BUBT), Uttara University and International University of Business Agriculture & Technology (IUBAT). The valuable contributions with answers and opinions of these faculties have made the questionnaire fruitful. Through the questionnaire, two types of responses were found. One is selective answer from the given options and another one is open ended answer.

Interviews through questionnaires, opinions, participant observations, interpretation and descriptive analysis are the instruments of this qualitative study. Access of secondary sources like the theoretical background of GTM, CLTA and the empirical review over the collected data are combined intellectually to get the facts of the research. One questionnaire has prepared for the teachers, with two types of questions. One is M.C.Q and another one is open ended. Validity, reliability and practicality are the major three aspects of any questionnaire and these components make the questionnaire more authentic and applicable. The Teachers' questionnaire is valid regarding to content and criterion validity because it deals with the similar questions that deal with the research topic. The teacher questionnaire has stability, consistency and certain degrees of validity to have consistent result at the same time. The questionnaire is also pretested before administered, that it takes only 20 minutes and it is more relevant because it deals some issues which are concerned with the teachers only. Alridge and Levine (2001) pointed out three types of analysis: descriptive, analytical and contextual. The correlations among the answers of respondents are scrutinizing carefully to understand the factors affecting the conflicts which create hindrance in teaching[8]. The responses of the subjects are generalized to the entire population and the issue wise percentage has exposed on the number of respondents on the concern of total respondents.

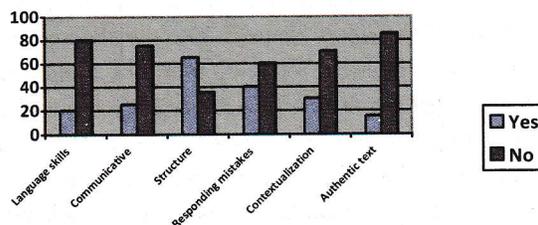
Findings and Discussion

In this section, the results of the surveys have been carried out at three ways. The MCQ has analyzed through correlation of answers which are almost same regarding the issues of GTM and CLTA. These findings are exhibited at four graphs. The MCQ which are based on some basic issues of the topic are shown in percentage. At the open ended section the different opinions of the teachers are critically sorted out. All findings from the questionnaire have been discussed and the recommendations are expressed on the basis of findings and discussions.

Question no.1 deals with the problems faced by the classroom drills in GTM. The issues are asked under this question to the teachers are about the classroom drills; practicing language skills, lack of communication, understanding language structure, responding to the mistakes, contextualization, dealing with real life situation and use of authentic texts. On these issues the teachers opine differently. The ratios of their answers are shown in the following graph 1:

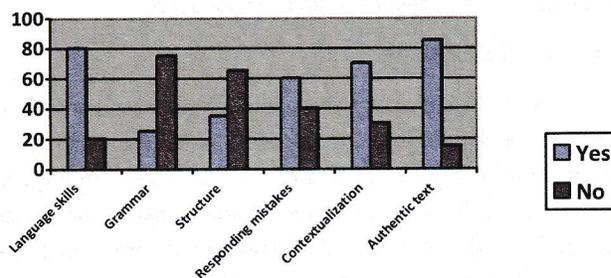
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Graph-1 : Problems faced in GTM classroom drills



Question no. 2 deals with the problems faced by the classroom drills in CLTA. The issues are asked under this question to the teachers about the classroom drills; practicing language skills, lack of grammar practice, understanding language structure, responding to the mistakes, contextualization of the class materials, dealing with real life situation and use of authentic texts. On these issues the teachers opine differently. The ratios of their answers are shown in the following graph 2:

Graph-2 : Problems faced in CLTA classroom drills

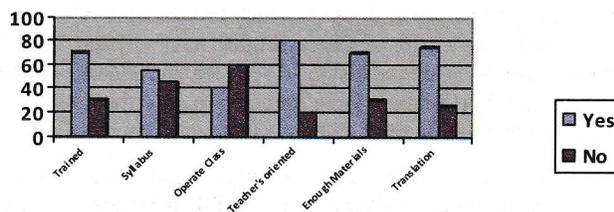


Question no.1 and 2 are almost correlated with their issues. In GTM the reading and writing skills are practiced only whether CLTA stressed on all of the language skills. In GTM the lack of communication is a problem on the other hand lack of grammar practice is a problem in CLTA. GTM bases on grammar rather than communication and CLTA bases on interaction rather than the practice of grammar. The structure of the language refers the grammatical accuracy of any language which is stressed by GTM rather than CLTA. In GTM teachers do not respond to the mistakes completely because they could not offer their attention at the mistakes of each and every student. Contextualization in GTM is not so focused because the rules of grammar can not be contextualized

but in CLTA the practice of language skills can be contextualized easily. So GTM avoids the use of authentic texts whether CLTA prefers the authentic texts.

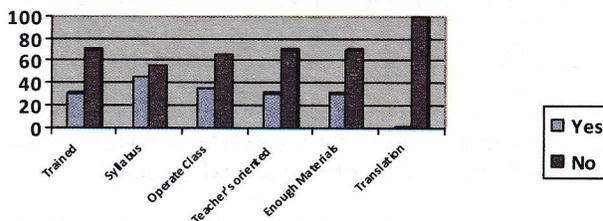
Question no.3 deals with the problems faced by the teachers in teaching through GTM. The issues under this question were asked to the teachers about the problems faced by the teachers; training on GTM, suitability of present English syllabus to teach through GTM, problems in operating class as a non native teacher in GTM, availability of course materials to teach through GTM, teacher oriented classroom, necessity of interaction. On these issues the teachers' answer ratios are shown in the graph 3:

Graph-3 : Problems faced by the teachers in teaching through GTM



Question no. 4 deals with the problems faced by the teachers in teaching through CLTA. The issues under this question were asked to the teachers about the problems faced by the teachers; training on CLTA, suitability of present English syllabus to teach through CLTA, problems in operating class as a non native teacher in CLTA, availability of course materials to teach by CLTA, teacher oriented classroom, necessity of interaction. On these issues the teachers' answer ratios are shown in the graph 4:

Graph-4 : Problems faced by the teachers in teaching through CLTA



As GTM is an old ELT method so the teachers are trained up properly on the other hand CLT as a newly decided approach the teachers training is not available like GTM. And the maximum teachers of undergraduate level were learned GTM at their early educational background so they need more training in CLTA. The

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English syllabus of the other department at undergraduate level are mostly designed on the communicative approach rather a grammatical one. In GTM the teachers rarely face any problems to operate class and it is easy for them to express themselves unlikely in CLTA teachers frequently face problems because they could not use their mother tongue at the classroom to operate class less expressive at this teaching method. As GTM is teacher oriented method so they have their complete authorization at the classroom but in CLTA the classroom is learner centered and they play as a role of instructor rather than an authorized guide. As GTM is an old fashioned method the study materials are available in the existing market in contrast CLTA is based on authentic texts/ real life situation so the study materials of CLTA are not so available in Bangladeshi market. Some private universities, especially Kamrul Hasan (2010) a faculty of University of Liberal Arts mentioned in one of his articles that they follow the 'Compiled English Course Book' to teach the students of the other department at their University as a part of Basic English course [9]. The GTM with lack of interaction which creates a distance between the teacher-student. On the other hand, the CLTA classrooms are interactive but the absence of using native language and translation often makes it less comprehensible than GTM.

Question no. 5 deals with some common issues concerning both CLTA and GTM. Under these questions the issues and their responses are given through the table of percentage.

(a) Does the English syllabus for the multidiscipline students demand these given method?

| CLTA | GTM | Others |
|------|-----|--------|
| 50% | 30% | 20% |

(b) Which one is more comfortable teaching method?

| CLTA | GTM | None |
|------|-----|------|
| 30% | 60% | 10% |

(c) Do you think that the CLTA and GTM are contradictory to each other?

| Yes | No | Sometimes |
|-----|-----|-----------|
| 70% | 00% | 30% |

(d) Do you think neither CLTA nor GTM is enough to teach English to the students of other department at undergraduate level?

| Yes | No | Sometimes |
|-----|-----|-----------|
| 50% | 30% | 20% |

(e) Do you feel that an admixture of the classroom drills of CLTA and GTM could be helping us to overcome this perplexing condition?

| Yes | No | Sometimes |
|-----|-----|-----------|
| 60% | 20% | 20% |

Under question no. 5 in response to the question (a) the mix reaction of all teachers suggests that the English syllabus for the other department does not depend on any particular method. The teachers need to apply both GTM and CLTA and sometimes other teaching methods to take class. At the answer of question (b) maximum teachers acknowledge that GTM is more comfortable teaching method because the teaching materials are available in GTM and they often feel discomforts at CLTA because of the unavailability of teaching materials and the use of authentic text make them less prepare for the classroom. At question (c) 70% teachers agree that GTM and CLTA are completely contradictory to each other and 30% of the teachers opine that in some cases the both teaching methods are conflicting. In response to the question (d) half of the teachers think neither CLTA nor GTM is enough to teach the students at tertiary level, 30 % of the teachers think that these existing methods are enough and 20% of teachers think that in some cases these are not enough teaching method. At question (e) 60 % of the teachers think that an admixture of the classroom drills of both methods will create a better classroom, 20% teachers think that no admixture of classroom drill is welcoming to them and rest teachers think that some drills could be admixture.

Question no. 6 is an open ended question; in this question the proposals were asked to the teachers to create a better classroom from the contradictory position of CLTA and GTM. On the basis of this question different suggestions are received from the teachers. To create a better classroom, teachers suggested the admixture of classroom drills of both CLTA and GTM, more interactive classrooms, updated teachers' training, contextualization of teaching courses and reducing the communication gap among the educationists, teachers and students. Moreover, CLTA encourages the use of group-work and pair-work activities in the classroom which activities require sharing of views of each participant equally. The classrooms in Bangladesh are not divided on the basis of knowledge level of the students. So, sharing doesn't take place practically which convey the optimistic activities at a loss.

Classroom observation at a private university (Prime University) in Bangladesh shows that the learners demonstrate mix reaction to this newly decided approach. The teachers expect their learners to be active, initiative in the language classroom. The learners are not allowed to ask for the bilingual word or sentence meaning whereas they do not have a better understanding of the content which is being discussed in the classroom. This situation keeps the learners in a bewildering state. The students are non responsive by their attitude, they are fear to communicate with the target language. In GTM teachers have to be corrective and operate the class through native and non native language. But, in CLTA the use of native language is strictly prohibited and the role of a teacher is an instructor only. Group work, pair work in CLTA classroom are not effective in all

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time, sometimes it becomes chaotic. In developing the listening and speaking skills the use of study aids are not available at many universities; moreover, the non responsive society and the outer activities of classroom are not welcoming to develop the communicative competence of a student. But, in traditional GTM the use of study aids are not much needed and the communicative competencies are not stressed. So, the non responsive society does not create any problem in traditional GTM.

Recommendations

]To overcome the divergences between CLTA and GTM for successful ELT at undergraduate level teaching the following measures can be taken:

- a) At undergraduate level, a particular communicative syllabus can be followed to develop our communicative competence.
- b) All concerned educationist at the undergraduate level should concern about teacher-learner friendly curriculum with serving practical purposes.
- c) Classroom activities can be selected according to the need of the learner.
- d) Learners understanding of the subject matter should be ensured, if needed with the help of First Language (L1).
- e) The students need a complete communicative atmosphere inside/outside of the classroom through the target language.
- f) The class drills and principles of CLTA can be contextualized in Bangladeshi circumstance; such as, using Bangladeshi culture, society as a topic of interactive communication.
- g) The use of sentence, vocabulary should be more contextualized and the stress on sentence structure may be given to teach an error free, communicative English.
- h) The teachers need more training and follow up monitoring of the training on CLTA in order to make them more competent in English Language Teaching.
- i) Teacher-student interaction should be more developed to make the classroom more effective.
- j) Testing system should be equally divided on the basis of language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Conclusion

Recently, Bangladeshi educationists have introduced CLTA for Bangladeshi classrooms at secondary, higher secondary level and the ultimate result at undergraduate level teaching is trying to follow CLTA. The paper shows an inconsistent situation in Bangladesh. Practically, neither CLTA nor GTM is adopted and practiced at this level. Rather it becomes the mixture of GTM, Direct Method, ALM, CLTA and so on. The teachers often face the challenging

situation to create a successful ELT classroom. With a view to fulfilling the major conditions of CLTA as learner-centered classroom, the teachers should not locate the space for their stable role (as a mentor or guide or instructor or facilitator). A re-consideration of GTM and CLTA with proper revision and contextualization could be taken by all concerned authorities (educationist, teachers and ELT practitioners) to get relief from this conflicting situation. Moreover, the ongoing conflict between Communicative Language Teaching Approach and Grammar Translation Method refers the translocation and transgressing of the ELT methodologies and their implications which might be referring a starting of post pedagogical era in teaching English to the students of other department at undergraduate level.

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