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## **TEACHING OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH LEARNERS' CENTERED APPROACH**

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### **Abstract**

*This research aims to explore how latest methodologies of language teaching brings a positive change in classroom environment by involving students unconsciously in learning process, hence improving their communication skills. One hundred and fifty Undergraduate Students from Bahria University participated in this research. The participants filled a questionnaire about different techniques which were used throughout semester to teach them communication Skills. The data was analyzed in SPSS where Univariate (frequency distribution) and bivariate (Chi-Square test) were applied. Results show that they were able to improve their skills clearly. This research recommends educators to lessen Teachers' Talking Time and increase Students' Talking Time. Also use of Concept Checking Questions and Instructions Checking Questionss is encouraged to bring a difference in language learning classrooms. Furthermore, the study suggests that there is a great need to train and motivate learners through different strategies which involve role-play, movie-watch, use of jazz chants, songs and grammatical games.*

### **Keywords**

Students' Talking Time, Pedagogy, Role-Play, Communication Skills, Teaching Paradigms

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## **1. Introduction**

The latest methodologies of teaching have revolutionized the field of language learning. A teacher is no more considered as an authority and learners are supposed to be all in all in a student-centered class. Now students get a chance to experience a real and authentic learning. Because they

are the one who take control of their learning by participation. The role of teacher is now limited where they are there just to facilitate the whole learning process. But this does not mean that teachers are totally passive. But in terms of supervision they are very active, thus motivating each and every student to participate in communicative activities. So, their role is pivotal in the classroom. The teacher controls each and everything that happens in the classroom (Harmer, 2001).

English Language Teaching and learning seem to be a daunting task. Despite all difficulties, it has become a very popular way of teaching in most of the private and public institutions in Pakistan. The Practitioners use different pedagogy that involves a variety of teaching techniques from different methods in their classrooms to bring a positive change in terms of learning through communication, thus following eclectic approach. A number of studies have been conducted to examine the various aspects of communication strategies. The results drawn from these studies not only help to highlight problems faced by the non-native speakers but also guide to find out solutions to these issues, hence causing a paradigm shift in language teaching. There are several different methods of teaching including Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, Audiolingual Method, Community Language Learning, The Silent Way, Communicative Language Teaching, Total Physical Response

Grammar Translation Method (GTM) influenced West and foreign language teaching from 1840s to 1940s and continued to be used in changed forms in some parts of the world. It aims at developing reading and writing skills through the translation of reading texts into mother tongue. The rules of grammar and vocabulary are considered vital that's done through an explicit way of teaching a foreign language. It implies the memorization of rules and its application to sentence structures, and the use of lexis. The teacher acts as an authority dominating the whole class by giving instructions and directing the students who are quite passive in whole process (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

In Pakistan, in most of the public-sector intuitions, this method is still considered as the best way of language teaching as the teacher is an authority and translates text from foreign language to students' native tongue.

Aziz in 2010, pointed out following drawbacks of GTM that it helps to get the knowledge on literature but doesn't help to develop the ability to produce language in an academic or social context. Teachers using Grammar Translation Method (GTM) insists on the description of rules rather than the function of language structures (Aziz 2010)

Richards and Rodgers (2001), explained the important features of Direct Method (DM) that in this method Classroom instruction was given totally in the target language while Only daily vocabulary and sentences were taught. Inductive ways of grammar teaching were used while new points were introduced orally. New Vocabulary was taught with the help of realia or pictures

Henry Sweet pointed out the drawbacks to the application of this method that it assisted in bringing innovations at the level of teaching procedure but didn't give a thorough methodological ground. He also found that DM needed the command of language rather than depending upon a textbook. However, they are not capable enough to stick to the specifications of this method. Sweet and other applied linguists argue that the development of sound methodological principles can serve as the basis for teaching techniques. The future evolution lead to the foundation of Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) in the United States and Oral Approach (OA) or Situational Language Teaching (SLT) in United Kingdom.

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) is one of the teaching methods implying behaviorist theory of learning a target language. It was developed to serve the purpose of military communication during World War II (1939-1945) in the United States of America. The main purpose of the teaching program was to train Army Officers quickly and effectively in foreign language skills. Some of the salient features of this method are that language learning is like developing a habit, while mistakes making is also a habit but a bad one that should be avoided. Richards (1998) also propagated that language can be acquired through language rules and cultural context.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was originated in the West in the late 1960s. It was found soon after the introduction of latest ways of teaching in foreign language teaching that the less knowledge about the target language forms, semantics, and functions obstruct the process of language learning. Lamie (2005) also noticed a basic change in English Language Teaching paradigms.

An important feature of Communicative Approach (CA) is to include learners in a mental process for the acquisition of knowledge in terms of language performance. It advocates use of role-plays, guessing games, acting as an MC, singing songs and problem-solving tasks in a formal learning environment. A variety of these tasks not only draw students' attention but also arouse motivate in them towards a foreign language learning process. Therefore, (Richards et al) point out some of the essential features of Communicative Language Teaching that it focuses on meaning

rather than form; it involved learner-centered approach where students are supposed to interact with their peers in order to share their idea in target language, thus developing fluency by

The results from the discussion depicts that the underlying methods applied to Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have pros and cons. One of the earliest ways of teaching was Grammar Translation Method (GTM) which seems obsolete now because of emergence of cognitive psychology. In modern era, student-centered approach is more preferred by the students and teachers in language learning context. It therefore becomes inevitable for teachers to facilitate their learners with latest knowledge and strategies of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Therefore, Communicative Approach (CA) and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) are getting more popular now a day all over the world.

### **1.1 Objectives**

To find out the Effects of Students' Centered Approach on Learning process.

### **1.2 Hypothesis**

H: Greater the involvement of students in group activities, Higher is the confidence level of students in public speaking.

**1.3 Research Question:** How Communicative Skills of Students could be improved by adapting new Teaching Methodologies?

## **2. Methodology**

This study shows the result of an online survey investigating respondents' preferences in language learning classes. In this regard some basic variables were developed to measure the significance of these effects. One hundred and fifty Undergraduate Students from Bahria University participated in this research. Thus random Sampling technique was used. Of those respondents 58.7% were males and 41.3 % were females.

The participants filled a questionnaire about different techniques which were used throughout semester to teach them communication Skills. Quantitative methodology was used and data was collected by using a closed questionnaire, framed in Likert Scales (Likert, 1932). The survey consists of 24 questions. Such questions include a four-point scale asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with comments. The scale runs from 1 = "Not at all" to 4 = "very greatly," which was recoded in data analysis. A variety of statistical analyses were conducted in this study to extricate information from the survey responses. The participants' responses were examined as a whole, and the female responses were also examined separately (although there was no significant variation in findings for the purely female data set compared to the full set).

### 3. Results

This section deals with the analysis and interpretation of data collected through the questionnaires. After data collection, data analysis is the most essential step for any research that needs to be done carefully. This section describes the demographic features of the respondents as well as their responses to different questions.

**Table 1:** *Frequency distribution of the respondents regarding gender and language learning*

S. No	Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Gender of the Respondents			
i	Male	88	58.7%
ii	Female	62	41.3%
Total		150	100.0%
Learning through dialogues			
i	Very greatly	77	51.3
ii	greatly	58	38.7
iii	somewhat	11	7.3
iv	Not at all	4	2.7
Total		150	100.0%
Responsiveness of students to lecturing			
i	greatly	3	2.0
ii	somewhat	16	10.7
iii	Not at all	131	87.3
Total		150	100.0%
Learning in terms of more TTT			
i	Very greatly	1	.7
ii	greatly	9	6.0
iii	somewhat	29	19.3
iv	Not at all	111	74
Total		150	100.0%
Learning in groups			

i	Very greatly	113	75.3
ii	greatly	25	16.7
iii	somewhat	9	6.0
iv	Not at all	3	2.0
Total		150	100.0

Learning Fluency and accuracy through Jazz Chants

i	Very greatly	78	52.0
ii	greatly	53	35.3
iii	somewhat	10	6.7
iv	Not at all	9	6.0
Total		150	100.0

Enhancement of language through songs

i	Very greatly	80	53.3
ii	greatly	53	35.3
iii	somewhat	15	10.0
iv	Not at all	2	1.3
Total		150	100.0

Getting teacher's instructions at once

i	Very greatly	5	3.3
ii	greatly	14	9.3
iii	somewhat	57	38
iv	Not at all	74	49.3
Total		150	100.0%

Learning through CCQs

i	Very greatly	149	99.3
ii	greatly	1	0.7
Total		150	100.0%

Comfortability at teacher's interruption

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iv	Not at all	150	100
Total		150	100.0%
Learning through ICQs			
i	Very greatly	150	100.0
Total		150	100.0
Less TTT enhance learning			
i	Very greatly	150	100.0
Total		150	100.0
Grammar learning through games			
i	Very greatly	83	55.3
ii	greatly	51	34.0
iii	somewhat	13	8.7
iv	Not at all	3	2.0
Total		150	100
Learning through movie watch			
I	Very greatly	82	54.7
ii	greatly	55	36.7
iii	somewhat	11	7.3
iv	Not at all	2	1.3
Total	Total	150	100

The above table 1 shows the gender of the respondents. According to the data collected (58.7%) respondents were male while (41.3%) were females. A majority of respondents belonged to the age group (18-20 years) as they are undergraduate students of second semester from Management Sciences Department of Bahria University, Islamabad Campus.

The next point in table shows the frequency distribution of respondents regarding Learning through dialogues. According to 51.3% respondents it was really very great idea to learn language through dialogues while 38.7% respondents think it's a great idea but for 7.3% it's somewhat good while 2.7% think it's not at all good idea.

It's possible due to different factors like majority of the learners would prefer to make certain dialogues and deliver same during different activities while a few are not comfortable doing this because of their shyness or hesitation of accepting different learning styles. However, learning through dialogues is very effective way of language learning as it helps to bring a variety in lesson by using different kinds of dialogues. According to Ur (1996), students must get a chance to use target language while talking that can happen through learning and thus delivering the dialogues.

The results obtained from the data collected demonstrate the frequency distribution of respondents regarding responsiveness of students to lecturing where only 2% think that it's a great idea, 10.7% consider it acceptable somewhat while 87.3% don't like lecturing at all. The reason behind this could be passiveness experienced by students during these lectures. During Lectures the students become passive listener and easily get bored, that's why for majority it's not a good idea at all in communicative class. One of the major findings in a study by Small (1996) was that learners considered teachers responsible for arousing their interest or getting them bored during language learning. According to another study, 51 % students do not attend their classes because of negative impression of their teachers (Brewer, Burgess 2005).

The above table shows the frequency distribution of respondents regarding Learning in terms of more teacher's talking time where only one respondent thought that it's a very great idea while 9 respondents felt that it's a great idea. 19.3 % considered it somewhat good idea but 74 % thought it's not at all good way of learning when teacher talks more in class. While another table shows that 100% students thought it's a great idea to have less teacher's talking time, so they do get more time to focus on learning and using target language. When teacher talks more in class then students hardly get time to learn and use foreign language. So, it's highly recommended that teacher's talking time should be minimized so students can get more time to speak and perform different activities.

One of the findings in above table shows the frequency distribution of respondents regarding learning in groups where 75.3 % thought it's a very great notion while 16.7percent considered it a great idea. According to 6% it was somewhat good but for 2% it was not at all good idea. The learning in groups is really very effective way of language learning as it allows to have liberty in groups to say anything, also group discussion helps to get more confidence. Thus, collaboration in



terms of group activities helps to improve learners' overall performance by encouraging students to get involved more and more in group tasks that maximize the contact among members as well as groups thus helping them to become more confident (Bossert 1988; Bowman, Frame, and Kennette 2013; Hennessey 1999; Kennette and Frank 2010; Kramarski and Mevarech 2003; Rajaram and Pereira-Pasarin 2007; U.S. Department of Education 1992).

Another result in the table shows that 52 % students thought it was really a very great idea to learn and develop fluency and accuracy through Jazz chants while 35.5% considered it simply great. Only 6.7% students somewhat liked it while 6% don't like it at all. The fluency and accuracy are learned and enhanced through Jazz chant because it involves students to repeat particular lyrics thus emphasizing on correct use of rhythm and intonation of speech. Carolyn Graham also pointed out the importance of Jazz chants to improve speaking and listening skills and to present grammar structures in lyrical forms. Forster (2006) says that jazz chant helps to have fun activities and quite innovative for teaching English

One more result shows that 53.3% learners considered it a very great notion to enhance language skills through listening to songs while 35.3 %thought it was a great idea. 10% thought it was somewhat acceptable but 1.3 percent didn't like this idea at all. More or less same effects listening to songs have on language learning as Jazz chants, thus enhancing the language skills of learners in terms of listening and speaking. When learners listen to different lyrics, they unconsciously keep on repeating the same thus improving their listening and speaking skills.

Another finding shows that only 5% students thought that they get teacher's instructions at once while 9.3 thought it was a great idea to get instructions from teacher.38% considered it somewhat acceptable while 49.3 % not at all liked this idea. This clearly shows that for students it's always confusing to get teacher's instructions at once that's why ICQs have been introduced to make it easy for students to get instructions clearly. As one of the tables shows the frequency distribution of respondents regarding comprehension by ICQs where 100% respondents considered ICQs as the best way of getting instructions. Concept checking is checking the comprehension of hard features of the target structure in terms of function and meaning. It is proved from above table where 99.3 respondents considered CCQs as a very great idea while only0.7 % thought it's great notion. Concept checking is inevitable, since learners should completely grasp the structure prior to further practice of form.

The above table shows an important finding about grammatical games that 55.3% students considered that it's a really very great idea to learn grammar through games while 34% thought it's a

great idea. 8.7% considered it somewhat good while 2% didn't like this idea at all. Because grammar learning through games help to stimulate overall language skills that's why majority considered it a good idea. According to Haldfield (1999) games should be an essential part of the language learning lesson. Thus, Games help to grasp basic grammatical rules and should be played in classrooms to enhance language learning.

According to data of one of the findings depicts 54.7% students thought it was a very great idea to learn language skills through movie watch while 36.7 % considered it really a great notion.7.3 % thought it's somewhat good while only 1.3 % thought it's not good at all. The majority found it very useful to watch movies for language learning as it helps to learn variety of sentence structures, thus enhancing listening and speaking skills of students. Movie watches are an important part of students' lives so it definitely helps to motivate them in language classroom because they find it more enjoyable to learn language through entertainment.

### **Testing of Hypothesis**

**H:** Greater the involvement of students in group activities, Higher is the confidence level of students in public speaking.

**Table 2:** Association between Group Learning and Confidence Level

Learning in groups and confident speakers	Chi-Sq		df	Level of Significance
	15.772		3	0.001

*Note: Level of significance < 0.05*

The above cross table clearly shows that there is an association existed between independent variable frequency of learning in groups and dependent variable that is confident speaker after practice. The relationship is then verified by the Chi-square test. Chi-square value for the above cross table is 15.772 and relationship is significant with the level of significance as 0.034 which shows the association between both dependent and independent variables. Thus, students who learn in groups are much more confident

## **4. Conclusion**

Teachers are suggested to conduct activities-based lessons in their classrooms instead of simply lecturing or explaining different language rules. Students should be given adequate time to practice and produce language structures on their own. Teachers should only facilitate, guide or motivate the learners instead of explaining each and every aspect of language in detail. Separate time

should be given to Jazz chants and songs in language learning classes to develop fluency and accuracy. Teachers shouldn't ask direct questions like "Are you getting meaning of this word" or "Did you get my instructions" or "Is it clear" rather they should prefer ICQs or CCQs. Also, teachers shouldn't interrupt every now and then during the activities rather they should jolt down all points and discuss later on with all individually or in groups depending upon the task. Similarly, movie watch and games must be given proper time in language learning class to enhance communication skills of students.

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