



The Use of Some Aspects of the Communicative Language Teaching or Effective Linguistics Instruction: The Case of First Year Students, University of Oum El Bouaghi

استخدام بعض جوانب التعليم القائم على الاتصال في اللغة لتحقيق فعالية
تدريس اللسانيات: دراسة حالة طلبة السنة الأولى جامعة أم البواقي

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ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الآثار المترتبة عن الاختيار الفعال لبعض جوانب تدريس اللغة التواصلية. بما في ذلك التفاعل، والأنشطة التواصلية والعمل الجماعي، لتدريس مادة اللسانيات من خلال فحص عينة من طلاب الصف الأول اختبرت عشوائيا في قسم الآداب واللغة الانجليزية في جامعة أم البواقي. وفي مثل هذه الأبحاث التجريبية، يسلط الضوء على كيفية توفير ظروف استيعاب أفضل لمحتوى مادة اللسانيات. وأشارت نتائج هذا البحث أنه كلما زاد التفاعل في حصة اللسانيات زاد التعلم. لذلك، فإن فهم محتوى مادة اللسانيات مرتبط بمدى اندماج المتعلمين بالمعرفة في حد ذاتها.

الكلمات الدالة: طرق تدريس اللغات؛ CLT؛ تدريس اللسانيات.

Abstract

This research aims at investigating the effects of the effective selection of some aspects of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); interaction, communicative activities and group work, for effective linguistics instruction on a randomly selected sample of 74 first year English students at Oum el Bouaghi University. In such an experimental research, focus is put on how best some CLT aspects help language learners accommodate with the module of linguistics. The findings indicate that the more the audience is engaged within a linguistics course, the more learning and comprehensible input (Krashen.1987) takes place. In a nutshell, understanding takes place when learners experience knowledge by themselves.

Keywords: methods of language teaching; CLT; teaching linguistics.

1. Introduction

At the Department of English at the University of Oum el Bouaghi, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) has been carried out through various approaches and methods. The diversity of method selection occurred in tandem with the diversity of the content of subjects and the students' learning styles.

The subject matter of linguistics, of concern in the present article, undertakes language as a human activity, which allows foreign language learners to find out about the target language, language structure, pronunciation, meaning and culture. The teaching of these language items demands the utilisation of real-life illustrations and the active involvement of students in the course. After a post interview with linguistics teachers in the Department of English, teachers have admitted that their classes are teacher-centred. Linguistics instruction has been dealt with as a spoon-feeding course where students play a passive role, which makes of the teachers' teaching method a traditional one.

Because linguistics needs an intensive concentration from the part of students, the main challenge of teachers is to ensure a comprehensible input (Krashen 1987). The way linguistics is taught at the Department of English at the University of Oum El Bouaghi seems to be complex and boring. This leads, one can contend, to students' negative perception of what is being presented to them. For this point, linguistics as a content subject does not mean that it should be taught as a lecture-oriented class. It is rather a subject that requires from teachers to investigate new methods that help best engage their students in the learning process to ensure effective understanding (Correa; 2014).

2. Background Of The Study

Language teaching has been a graduate profession for years. Teaching has known a number of radical changes as for how teaching languages can be effectively processed. In this process,



a number of methods have emerged, each of which supports the attainment of basic objectives.

Decades ago, a shift was recognized as for the occurrence of different methods of language teaching. The shift of the occurrence of methods was characterised by a shift in the methodology of teaching covering teachers' and students' roles, materials to be used and technology in foreign language classrooms. Accordingly, various teaching perspectives showed up to elicit whether to use the native or the target language when teaching the foreign language (FL).

In such a perspective, many researches were conducted resulting in the emergence of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) as an initial step for English Language Teaching (ELT). As its name suggests, the GTM which was referred to as the traditional method emphasized the teaching of grammar aspects that are translated from and into the target language (Jin-fang and Qing-Xue; 2007, pp: 61-69).

The little use of the target language and the immense exposure to translation tasks led to the dissatisfaction of the method. Because of this, language researchers have redirected thinking from focus on grammar to focus on language use. This redirection has evenly led to the emergence of many other approaches with different aspects and teaching methodologies. Methods like the Direct Method and the Audiolingual Method have successively appeared to support the perspective that the oral skills, as an instance, should be given primary care at the expense of reading and writing (Richards and Rodgers; 1986).

Away from this, Educational Psychology played some part to mark the language teaching and learning context giving birth to methods as Lozanov's Suggestopedia (1976). Lozanov conducted a research to find out that students may well encounter some psychological barriers that hinder their language learning. These have been the traces that gave birth to the method that calls for learners' relaxation while learning (Rustipa. 2011). Its slogan is that there should be given a minute care to the relationship between cognition and music to help



learners learn the language in a better way (Dörnyei, 2005). Suggestopedia has not been widely adopted since it demands specific learning conditions.

Dealing with learner's psychology has also led researchers to rethink the role that learners play while learning the foreign language. Accordingly, methods like the Silent Method (SM), the Total Physical Response Method (TPR) and the Natural Approach Method (NA) came into being and based their principles on Krashen's (1970's-1980's) Monitor Theory that seeks to develop learner's communicative competence through deep practice of real life activities that encourage communication. For example, the Natural Approach expects more to be done by learners with minute care to their motivation and aptitude towards learning the target language. In this view, Krashen (2009) stated that "learners do what they say they do" (p.121). His theory covers a mixture of methods where the use of the TPR is emphasized particularly during the comprehension (silent/production) stage (Zainuddin et al. 2011).

On the basis of the pre-presented theoretical premises of previous methods, a new direction of English language teaching has emerged which is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT has spread all over the world and has been implemented in the teaching of many subjects within the language context.

As for Zainuddin et al (2011), CLT is comprised by three general principles covering the communication principle where students are exposed to activities that emphasize communication, the task principle; which gets students to the completion of real-life tasks and the meaningful principle; where authentic and meaningful use of the language is endorsed through a set of activities. CLT focuses on communication in the first place while grammar serves as a means for better learning. CLT came up, according to Yule (2010), as a reaction to the idea that conscious learning of grammar and its basic presence since the infancy lead to



effective use of the language. CLT sees that all language aspects can merely be learned in context rather than direct exposure to them.

3. The Teaching Of Linguistics

Linguistics in the language departments does not enjoy 'a privileged' place among language learners. This is so because learners do not feel interested or motivated to know more about the subject. To many learners, linguistics is boring and complex (Correa 2014). This is simply because learners play a marginal role in the linguistics course. They do nothing but listen and watch the teacher lecturing. For that reason, Correa (2014) claimed that "students [...] feel threatened by the pseudo-scientific flavor of [linguistics] courses" (p.167). This has been the fact that has led educators and language scholars to rethink new ways of discriminating the teaching of linguistics.

Though the field of linguistics has enjoyed a great popularity as for its relevance to the language-teaching context, issues related to the way linguistics should be taught has not been largely dealt with. In this respect, scholars like Battenburg and Lant (2003) have advocated that "while advances in instructional technology offer new ways to think about and teach in the humanities and the social sciences, inadequate attention has been paid to the teaching of linguistics and the employment of various pedagogical models within the classroom" (p. 03). Students' attitudes towards linguistics as a university subject yielded many scholars (Katchen (2004), Correa (2014)) to focus on the renewal of the methods for teaching linguistics and adapt new aspects of language teaching into the various contexts.

On that, Battenburg and Lant argue that addressing the knowledge of linguistics to students in a passive way cannot score effective understanding that is why the provision of technology can create the needed conditions that call for better understanding and rigor (p.04). Learners learn better when they feel involved within their learning process. They need to



be in charge of their own learning and this can also be applied for linguistics. In the same line, Katchen (2004) supports the view that technology can be beneficial for teaching linguistics referring to the use of videos as a motivational tool. He posits that “it is important in class to use video clips because it feels more interesting to see the person speaking, and comprehension is facilitated when we can see a talking head” (p. 09). Later, Correa (2014) discussed the need of changing the direction away from feeding learners with linguistics information. He referred to this as the ‘key factor’ for teaching linguistics lessons through active engagement to the course to make sure of material accessibility. This means that students need to feel responsible of their own learning process: They need to rely on themselves to seek solutions for previously known or new encountered information. For that, teachers are better supposed to flood their class with activities that help achieve the underlying objectives. Correa (2014) adds that

“the purpose of activities like these is to open students’ minds into the vast array of linguistic principles that govern languages at the same time that they discover how similar languages are in many other respects”. Moreover, “linguistics courses do not have to be ‘lecture-oriented, boring and/ or especially difficult [...] it is only by choosing the appropriate approach that we can guarantee an engaged audience” (p. 168).

4. Innovations in linguistics teaching

The evolution of foreign language teaching and learning has been largely affected by the emergence and development of technology. This latter has proved to contribute in the achievement of the language teaching and learning objectives to create a favourable platform that promotes learning within the classroom settings (Shyamlee and Phil, 2012). Technology; PowerPoint, images, internet, audios, videos, and others, has been integrated in favour of teaching various language-related elements. Much **has** been said about the integration of technology for teaching oral expression, grammar and literature and how best it helps in facilitating learning.



Linguistics, however, “has failed to accommodate the bulk of the empirical and theoretical advances” (Wacewicz et al. 2016. p: 01) that correspond teaching its content.

Recent researches in the process of language teaching and learning have tried to activate new trends on linguistics teaching to touch the teaching strategies, the learners’ role, the classroom nature and the implemented activities that help to attain better results in the understanding of the subject. Among these researches, Levis (2011) have conducted a study to integrate technology for an effective linguistics instruction. In their study, they suggest that instead of traditional face-to-face methods of content teaching, the Moodle can be more effective.

The Moodle, as they referred to, is “similar to WebCT and Blackboard, in that, it allows instructors to provide content [...], interact with students [...] and assess [them]” (p: 02). The Moodle can be a use of a PowerPoint presentation (which can replace lecturing), or videos for the aim of getting students interact and discuss the course content freely. The application of similar tools might well stimulate and motivate learners to be actively involved within the course study.

5. The study

5.1 The experiment

The study is experimental in nature; a Control and an Experimental Group (already pre-existing groups). Students in the Control Group have been taught through a lecture-oriented class. The teaching course has been very simple where the teacher is given the authority and the students play a marginal role (teacher-centeredness). Students of the Experimental Group have been at the centre of the course. They have been the only responsible on their leaning (student-centeredness). The teacher has been only the facilitator and the stimulator of her students.

For the methodology, there has been a presentation of a diversity of techniques among which a video (as an authentic material) has been introduced, students have been divided into groups (cooperative learning), and worked on lecture-related



concepts. They have tried to interact by expressing their perspectives towards the issue in hand (interaction) and have discussed their results to draw rules (classroom discussion). Moreover, there has been a wide range of activities implemented during the linguistics course. These activities have been integrated to call for students' motivation fixing them to suit all the learning styles and strategies that learners use in their learning process. Among the activities that have been implemented, the 'who am I game', 'the crossword game', 'acting breaks', and the 'watch and interpret game'.

By the end of the semester, the students, in both groups have had a test to check their understanding of the linguistics knowledge they have been subjected to. The nature of the activities included in the test has been new for both groups to ensure their credibility. Yet, students in the Experimental Group used to deal with a diversity of classroom tasks.

5.2 The participants

The sample is seventy four freshmen students at the Department of English at Oum Bouaghi University. For the sample randomisation, the participants were randomly chosen from two pre-existing first year groups; 32 students in the Experimental Group and 42 students in the Control Group.

5.3 Analysis of the Results of the Experiment

Scores obtained in the test **have been** analysed. The Experimental Group marks have been compared to the marks of the Control Group. Moreover, students' achievements in the test have been interpreted based on the learning atmosphere they experienced.

A favourable magnitude of difference in students' performance in the test have been revealed through the analysis of the results as shown in table 01. The fact that students have not been taught the same way has marked varying results. The test tasks have been average in nature but challenging only in terms of task newness.



The participants in the Experimental Group performed better than those of the Control Group. Students have answered well in four over five tasks. Table 01 shows that (68.54%) of students have been able to accomplish the tasks. Since the tasks were different and new to be applied for the Linguistics class, the tasks seem to have driven the students' attention and interest. Students seem to have felt motivated towards this sort of activities.

Their answers proved to be convincing as they have shown that they knew what they were doing. In Task One, as Table 01 shows, (63.54%) of the students of the Experimental Group have done well. The nature of the activity has, the researcher thinks, positively affected students' progress. The appropriate choice of activities might have well yielded an effective instruction that has led to the positive results. In Table (01), the Experimental Group's results progress has retreated in Activity Four (54.16%).

This task resembles traditional tasks that call for memorisation. For that, students have seemed fed up with such activities for they may consider them as an unwilling way of assessment. Foreign language learners are learning to learn and understand but not to solely memorise. It is preferable to help them with different activities to develop their interest to learn the foreign language. Of the total respondents of the Experimental Group (N=32), (31.24%) have not been able to accomplish all the activities. In all likelihood, they have felt lost moving from one activity to another. This can be justified with their irresponsible learning nature, carelessness and lack of concentration towards the linguistic courses content. All things considered, the way students have been taught has affected their thinking.

On the other hand, students' performance in the Control Group can be considered as average. In the test, (40.63%) of them have marked some advances. It has been remarked that the new experienced activities have made students feel lost. Students' inactive role may help them learn and understand but not learn to understand and then apply. This is why students'



progress in activities One (58.72%), Four (76.98%) and Five (82.53%) seem to deteriorate.

In Table 01, (66.66%) of students in the Control Group have acted positively. This concerned their tendency to apply better in activities where practice is the aim behind the given instruction. However, this has not been the case for the rest of the activities. Playing a passive role in a linguistics course can be the result of students' failure to prosper in various tasks that call for practice and communication. This has resulted in (59.35%) of the total respondents to fail in attaining the objective. This refers to students' lack of flexibility when encountering new activities, such as of the test.

Table 01: Right and wrong answers of the students in all the tasks in the experimental and the control groups

	Task one %		Task two%		Task three%		Task four%		Task five%	
	right	wrong	right	wrong	right	wrong	right	wrong	right	wrong
Exp Grp	63.5	36.45	76.55	23.44	73.43	26.56	54.16	45.83	76.04	23.95
	right: 68.74%					wrong: 31.24%				
Ctrl Grp	41.26	58.72	54.76	45.23	66.66	33.33	23.01	76.98	17.45	82.53
	right: 40.63%					wrong: 59.35%				

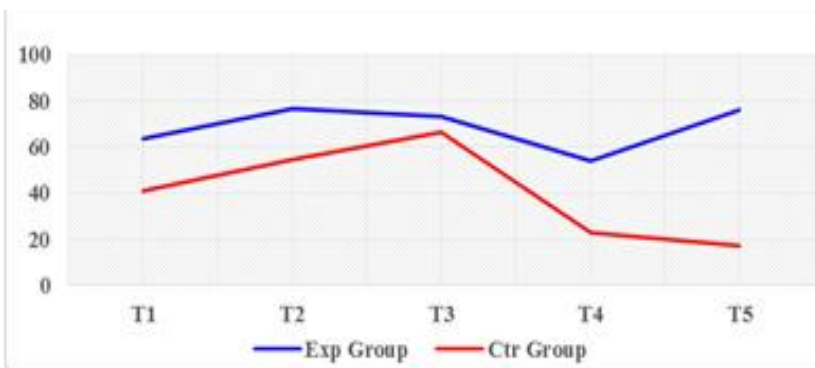


Figure 02: The students' progress in the whole test



Moreover, Figure 02 reveals the degree of advancement of both groups in the test. The blue line, which represents the progress of the Experimental Group, is getting higher. This explains students' understanding of the linguistics courses. These students show that they are highly self-confident when answering. By contrast, students in the Control Group as represented by the red line have been noticed to display fear and instability when moving through the various activities. They have started well in the very beginning of the test but they have lost control once they have moved further. In fact, it is by accustoming students to face the different tasks that call for communication and practice that they can be able develop self-confidence and high motivation with which learning can exceedingly be possible.

6. Recommendations

The present study offers the teaching of linguistics new insights that call for the betterment of teaching and learning experiences. The teaching tips that have been managed for the research can well guide future lesson plans in linguistics. The planned lessons that indicate the new strategies and tasks that learners tend to practise have been valuable for first level students' progress in the field of study.

The implemented strategies for linguistics teaching would count for positive scores at the level of students' comprehension and their achievements in the subject as first year English learners, and further. It is voluntary that learners of the different levels would enjoy learning linguistics in their BA and MA classes. Innovations in the teaching of linguistics are valuable. Getting learners to become an engaged audience may well raise their motivation and willingness to learn more about linguistics, not only as first year English students, but as F.L. learners across the different levels.

Integrating new activities in a linguistics course can be positively influential. New techniques like online videos and flipped classrooms can also be included within the wide range of the practices that lead to the understanding of the linguistics



content and in supporting students to make extra searches in the field for the purpose of developing their critical thinking and autonomy.

7. Conclusion

Students are said to be positively affected by the activities they used to have in the linguistics class. Their continuous exposure to a wide range of activities helps them adjust to new types of activities in a rather acceptable way. In effect, the more students are engaged in the learning setting, the more they feel confident, responsible and motivated to learn. The notion of getting an involved audience helps in implementing diverse classroom activities, break monotony and develop motivation that supports effective understanding and comprehensible input. These activities need to be designed to call for involvement and communication to ensure a live learning atmosphere.

Research results indicate that the appropriate selection and implementation of communicative activities is proved to be helpful and motivating even in content subjects like linguistics. This highlights that in the study, the Experimental Group students' enjoyment and understanding of the course content are in a harmony with the method being used. In effect, the more stimulated and engaged students a teacher can have, the more understanding and learning takes place.

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