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Assessing the Improvement in Descriptive Writing Skills with Communicative Teaching in Pakistan

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Abstract
The key objective of the research was to find the effect of communicative language teaching (CLT) on descriptive writing skills among 9th graders. Relevant literature revealed that descriptive writing skills can be enhanced with the help of communicative teaching. The Quasi experimental design was used. To conduct the experiment, six classes from two schools were selected conveniently. for gathering data to achieve the intended objective. Communicative lessons were intervention material. Results showed that communicative teaching had a significant effect on 9th graders' skills of description in terms of writing. The outcome of research tells that CLT is valuable for educationists. Further, it is recommended for teaching of writing any literary genre.

Key Words: Grammar Translation Method (GTM), English Language Teaching (ELT), Communicative Language Teaching, Descriptive Writing.

Introduction

Fluency is regarded as important as accuracy in the communicative approach. The primary importance is given to the function and secondary importance is given to the structure or form. The teacher has to facilitate the opportunities of real-life settings in classroom for significant development of communicative skills. Bajwa (20004) also discussed the principles of communicative approach. A strong version of the communicative approach says that learning occurs through communication. A weak version of communicative approach has a view to incorporate communicative activities in the already existing system of teaching. The Communicative approach can not only be used in speaking skill. It can be used to improve all the four skills specifically reading and writing skills. All the four skills i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking should be developed from the early stages of education. The reading and writing activities using the communicative approach involve the learner in real communication. Reading and writing activities both can be made applicable in the communicative approach. Errors can happen naturally during communicative process. Errors can be endured to make the communicative process fluent. The fluent communicators will also attain accuracy in using linguistic patterns with repeated exercise in the classroom without interruption. The instructor should use corrective feedback at the end of the communicative practice performed by the learner to flow the communication naturally. The target language should be the medium to express the views by the learner and instructor regarding the communicative situation in the classroom. The communicative test combining all the components of communicative approach and has realistic functions can be used for evaluation in the communicative approach. The teacher should be a fluent speaker of target language but he/she can use the native language judiciously such as to give indications for classwork, home assignments and test.

According to Samiullah (2015), the communicative approach is the best in achieving success in real life. Jobs in real life require good communication skills which can be attained through the communicative approach. The communicative approach can be used in teaching subjects other than English. The communicative approach promotes tension free atmosphere for learning. Meaningful communication is essential in the communicative approach. Communicative teaching approach involves activities such as pair work, group work, role play or simulations. The difficulties associated with the accomplishment of the communicative approach cannot deny the

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existence of fact that the communicative approach has been proven useful in developing the communicative skills of learners. He analysed the patterns of discussion used by people on online forums. He observed that a few people use discussion that is communicative in nature. The development of the communicative approach on online forums requires assistance and readiness of learner to use it. He further put forward his point of view that the perception of culture needs to be created in students for the application of learnt skills in their own context. The leaning and culture cannot move apart from each other. The interpretation of culture can be done through observation, experience and reflection. So, it is desired to frame the intercultural the communicative approach to learn the skills according to the needs and interests of one own society. The term communicative competence should be replaced with intercultural communicative competence.

Cooze (2006) related that communicative approach makes the games pleasurable. Task-based activities used in the communicative approach help to memorize the vocabulary. Vocabulary learning is mandatory in attaining expertise in all four communicative skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. The playing of vocabulary games is used in communicative classrooms. In games, learners interact with each other and learn the vocabulary. Games serve as a tool to practice communicative skills in other than native language. The use of games in lessons emphasizes the communicative competence of learners. Ali and Javed (2004) found that instructors and students have varied interests in the selection of activities in teaching of English. Instructors are more aware of students' choices in non-communicative activities.

Samiullah and Zaigham (2018) explicated that there is a need to motivate learner to use the target language for communication from the early stages of learning. They differentiated the communicative approach from other approaches as in the communicative approach linguistic competence is replaced by the communicative competence. This replacement is distinct from the traditional approaches of teaching. The teaching practice should be based on communicative functions not only on the linguistic features in which structure of discourse is examined. They also illustrated that the setting of circumstances is paramount for developing communicative competence. The communicative approach demands the role of the learner as a mediator, communicator, originator and giver of knowledge and the role of the instructor as a co-communicator, a needs inquisitor, a coordinator, a facilitator, a delegator and a learner. The communicative approach revitalizes the collaborative learning and focuses on the selection of contents by considering their communicative functions. They described that corrective feedback in a communicative approach brings positive change in learner's acquisition of a skill. There should be more focus on form in communicative approach. There should be mutual understanding for teacher's intentions and student's readiness during corrective feedback.

Griffith (2006) has a view that the inclination of teachers towards the communicative approach can help in its successful implementation. He inferred that teacher has a positive thought towards the principles and characteristics of the communicative approach. He deduced that communicative approach has influenced positively on the subject matter and pedagogical practices. According to Graham and Johnson (20003), teachers comprehend communicative approach can help the learners to intensify their communicative competence under proper circumstances. The communicative approach raises the interest of students in the learning process. Teachers are enthusiastic to adopt the communicative approach in their classrooms.

Statement of Research Problem

In this scenario, the researcher intended to explore the effects of the communicative approach on writing that is description.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to two high schools in District Lahore. This study is delimited to the descriptive writing skill for written work in the subject of English to the students of 9th class.

Objective of the Research

More precisely the purpose of research had been to see an overall effect of CLT on descriptive skills of writing.

Research Questions

Researchers attempted to answer these questions:
1. Is CLT beneficial for descriptive writing?
2. Is CLT equally influential on gender-based descriptive skills of writing?
3. *Is CLT equally influential on sector-based descriptive skills of writing?*

Significance of the Study

The backwash and lockstep effect of the examination system of Pakistan restricts the teachers more towards the theoretical knowledge of the subject and deviate them to devote appropriate concentration in improving the practical skills of students in the written work of the subjects. Consequently, students are not proficient in practical skills of writing and are not capable of writing their own work in the form of description. This study would prove beneficial in present situation as it would help to improve the writing skills of students. The results of this study would help the teachers to improve their methodology in teaching writing skills specifically to use the communicative approach. The researchers may get direction to apply other teaching methods to evaluate their effectiveness for writing skills at various levels of education in Pakistan. The educationists and curriculum developers will be benefited to use communicative approach in designing the curriculum of the writing of literary genre. They can design the communicative syllabus for practical work at the secondary level. They can guide the Government to arrange seminars and trainings for pre-service and in-service teachers to highlight the importance of communicative writing in the curriculum and for the practical implementation of descriptive writing skills at secondary level.

Literature Review

Samiullah (2015) considered the following characteristics of the communicative approach:
- Meaning is given priority over form and structure.
- Effective communication with the learner is desired.
- Judicious use of native language is advised.
- Translation can be used depending upon the situation.
- Communicative competence should be the target in intervention lessons.
- Fluency is the primary goal and accuracy is the secondary goal.
- Framework of classroom situation should promote interaction between learner and the research teacher.
- Teacher should be a facilitator of learner centered activities in the classroom.

Samiullah (2013) concluded that scientific descriptions can proceed through non-interactive/authoritative or interactive/authoritative the communicative approach. Student's question causes them to move the communicative approach into interactive/dialogic approach. Deep-rooted knowledge of teachers in science encourages the quality discussion in classroom. He observed that in EFL (English Foreign Language) countries, the teachers show hindrance in using communicative approach due to their beliefs and cultural constraints. The teachers feel convenience and satisfaction in teaching through the method of their own choice. The teachers are not willing to accept the trainers' perspectives of using communicative approach in their classrooms. Fatima and Zubeda (2009) concluded that in comparing the effectiveness of the communicative approach and the structural approach for teaching English at secondary level, structural approach was more welcomed by the students than the communicative approach. The reason behind this is the glack of classroom environment effective for the implementation of the communicative approach, lack of professionally trained teachers and Urdu as a medium of instruction for students in educational institutions in Pakistan.

The knowledge of the teacher about the principles of the communicative approach can help to implement the communicative approach efficiently. According to Samiullah (2019), in applying communicative approach, use tasks as a fundamental rule and provide relevant, wide-ranging and elaborative input to engage the learner in learning by doing. There should be the encouragement of cooperative and collaborative learning and concentrate

on focus on form in communicative approach. The addition of error corrective feedback in the communicative approach supports effective learning.

Samiullah (2019) expressed that activities in communicative approach are cause of participation of learners in realistic communication. It is desired in the communicative approach to communicate successfully by means of tasks the learner is performing rather than accuracy of language in the task. Discussion is an activity used in communicative approach to inquire and accumulate ideas, share views and presentation of statements before the learner to perform a task or answer a question. Discussion activity enhances the chances of interaction of learners and is a potent process that develops the skill of investigating the process systematically. Discussion activity also has the potential to use communicative act for the induction of input for the research process.

Harmer (2004) observed that teachers use activities such as discussion, games, role play, information gap activities, jigsaw and simulation in classrooms at elementary level. These activities originate communicative skills in students. The learners remain active in communicative classroom. Communicative activities help in the effective learning of English at elementary level and strengthen the cooperative abilities of learners as they learn how to interact with each other during teaching and learning process. Iqbal (2011) has a view that the communicative approach is a new or innovative approach to teach writing. Writing is an active skill and learners are active participants in the discussion of the concept. The goal of communicative approach is communicative competence that can be attained by means of a communicative syllabus and methodology. The intention of activities used in practical execution of communicative approach is to prepare the learner for real life through encounter of learners with various life situations in the communicative classroom. The needs and interests of learners are given priority in the communicative classroom. Many different components of communicative competence should be considered while engaging the learner in communicative tasks. These components are language skills, content, grammar, vocabulary and functions.

Rahman (2002) paraphrased that the communicative approach has various advantages. Learners can be encouraged through the communicative approach to develop writing skills by associating their use with real life situations. The communicative approach has been introduced in China secondary schools for solving problem of students' communication in real life situations. Teachers should be trained for the implementation of communicative approach in their classrooms. The communicative approach emboldens the interactional speaking activities in the classroom to prepare them for real communication either verbal or written. Raji (2009) resolved that communicative task-based teaching is a practical instructional approach as it encourages the real communication. The communicative interaction with fellows in group work helps in comprehension of text and development of skills. Rahman (2007) recounted that Communicative approach promotes a skilled based syllabus. It concentrates on four skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. Each skill is further analyzed into its micro-level subskills. Communicative competence deals with expertise of functions required for communication in real settings. Vocabulary and grammar are included in instruction according to the functions selected for communication. The notional and functional syllabus is designed by keeping in mind the notions and functions which a leaner has wish to exhibit. The task syllabus is fabricated by the activities that a learner will perform. In communicative activities, learners transfer real information that's concentrating on the aspect of real communication. Rasool (2009) said that writing practices in classrooms such as student's reports and feedback sheets improve the instructional process are the consequences of the communicative approach. A teacher can help the students to share the knowledge for creating the conditions effective to write in the classrooms. Students are exposed to various situations for writing to bring fluency in written text and also followings the desired grammatical patterns. Writing situations may vary according to the culture. Writing practices make use of discourse structures in a particular social context. Various approaches used for teaching writing to learners have potential to improve the existing situation. Saadat (2000) said that concrete and abstract factors should take into consideration for the development of communicative competence in different settings. Concrete factors are concerned with the circumstances in which communication happens and abstract factors involve the case of participants in which they perform different roles. Siddiqui (2007) told that communicative approach gives importance to the functional facet of the written discourse and is in favour of the concept that a worthwhile writing process can cause improvement in writing. The process of writing is interactional and social. Zafar (2009) noted that discussion assists in sharing of ideas and leads towards the position functional for the exercise of writing in different environments. The communicative approach offers pedagogical practices for implementation of

writing in different frames of references such as essay writing, report writing, brochures, letter writing, memorandums etc. It deals with the conviction that writing changes with the theme.

Give the independence for writing to the learner enable him to write fluently but it does not allow the learner to deviate from the restrictions of grammar while writing in different circumstances. There is a demand to diagnose the deficiencies of students writing in a specific field and design the instructional process capable of introducing practice of writing to the learner in that field to fulfill the shortcomings. Samiullah (2015) said that blogging has a successful role in improving the writing skills of learners. The use of authentic materials in teaching helped to improve the communicative competence of learners, observed by Samiullah (2015) reported that the integration of the communicative approach in Computer Assisted Language Learning Environment showed a positive attitude of learners towards learning. Samiullah (2019) said that writing is a communicative process. Writing should be taught as a conversational process in real settings. The appropriate environment is mandatory for teaching writing in various disciplines. The classroom conversation about a particular phenomenon is considered for writing about that phenomenon. Samiullah and Zaigham (2018) stated that writing is a multifarious process as it depends on coordination of various components to produce a communicative discourse. They reported that learning to write conveniently is a complicated task. The use of a good approach to teach writing can help to develop the writing skill of learner. This review of literature motivated the researcher to study the effect of communicative approach on writing skills of learner at the secondary level in the Pakistani context.

Method and Procedure

The detail is mentioned as the following:

Design

This is quasi-experimental study. The design of the study is a pre-test-post-test, non-equivalent control group design.

Sample

The participants in the experiment were 206. They were thirty-three (33) females/girls and one hundred and seventy-three (173) males/boys in this study. Convenient sampling was used.

Instrument

The instrument used for the study was a test. Pre-test and post-test were the same. The reliability of test was measured as .881 and validity of the test was determined by the expert's opinion.

Scoring Rubrics

The scoring rubrics were used to analyse the writing skills. The four tasks were included in the writing test. Each task had given a weightage of 25 marks. Each task was further analysed in terms of Grammar, Sequence, Mechanics, Fluency and Form having a weightage of 5 marks for each.

Data Analysis

This section presents data analyses as ahead

Overall Results

This is an overall picture of results

Table 1. Overall Comparison

Group		Pre-Test Mean	SD (Pre-Test)	Post-Test Mean	SD (Post-Test)	Gain	Effect Size	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Control (N=101)	Descriptive Writing	8.05	4.066	11.21	4.899	3.158	0.500	5.80	0.000***

Experimental (N=105)	Descriptive Writing	9.01	3.279	13.49	3.801	4.476	0.739	11.200	0.000***

Table 1 shows that the experimental group performed significantly as evident from the data in above shown table.

Gender Wise Comparison

The gender-wise analysis of the data has been displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Gender Wise Comparison

Group	Gender		Pre-Test Mean	SD (Pre-Test)	Post-Test Mean	SD (Post-Test)	Gain	Effect Size	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Control (N=21)	Female	Descriptive Writing	7.35	4.436	10.66	4.377	3.250	0.461	2.329	0.031*
Experimental (N=12)	Female	Descriptive Writing	11.58	2.673	16.67	2.675	5.083	0.842	5.814	0.000'**
Control (N=81)	Male	Descriptive Writing	8.24	3.873	11.32	5.016	3.073	0.504	5.221	0.000***
Experimental (N=92)	Male	Descriptive Writing	8.66	3.714	13.11	3.705	4.446	0.748	10.110	0.000***

There is no significant difference found between the performance of girls and boys. Anyhow, the girls' improvement in descriptive writing skills was better than boys as displayed in the table already.

Sector-Wise Comparison

Data analyses based on the sector are displayed in table 3 as follows.

Table 3. Sector-Wise Comparison

Group	Sector		Pre-Test Mean	SD (Pre-Test)	Post-Test Mean	SD (Post-Test)	Gain	Effect Size	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Control (N=54)	Public	Descriptive Writing	7.11	3.544	9.94	4.343	2.833	0.482	4.009	0.000***
Experimental (N=57)	Public	Descriptive Writing	9.00	3.331	13.88	3.949	4.476	0.729	11.200	0.000***
Control (N=47)	Private	Descriptive Writing	9.13	4.317	12.66	5.147	3.532	0.521	4.140	0.000***
Experimental (N=48)	Private	Descriptive Writing	9.00	3.128	13.09	3.550	4.085	0.777	8.3S1	0.000***

There is no significant difference found between the performance of public and private students. Anyhow, the private school improved better in descriptive writing skills.
These findings have been written after careful analysis of data.

Findings

The findings observed from analysis of the data are as ahead:

There had been a significant difference between the gains of experimental group students and control group English language learners. CLT was found better than traditional teaching method that is GTM in Pakistani English language classrooms. Similarly, there is no significant difference found between the performance of girls and boys. Anyhow, the girls' improvement in descriptive writing skills was better than boys. Likewise, there is no significant difference found between the performance of public and private students. Anyhow, the private school improved better in descriptive writing skills.

Conclusion

The following conclusion had been made from after careful statistical data analysis:
The descriptive writing might be improved statistically significant if CLT is used in ELT classrooms.

Discussion

The said approach had been found effective by Griffith (2006) to help novice English language learners. The same results were reported by Raji (2009) in terms of improvement in descriptive writing skills among high school students. Ali & Javed (2004) reported the significance of the methodology based on the communicative approach. Similarly, Cooze (2006) had been arguing in favor of the said teaching methodology that is based on communicative approach. Iqbal (2011), Fatima and Zubeda (2009), and Zafar (2009) reported as well that the communicative approach had significance to help pupils improve their descriptive writing skills. The similar results have been found by the researcher which are going to be reflected in the answers to the research questions ahead:

Answers to the Research Questions

Replies to questions were:
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) assists in improving the descriptive writing skills of high school students significantly. The communicative approach had a better effect on descriptive writing of girls than boys. CLT was more effective in private schools than in public schools.

Recommendation

CLT is recommended to teach drama writing. Likewise, it might be valuable to teach poetry composition as well as the said approach might be advantageous to teach prose writing. It is recommended as well that CLT might be meaningful for teaching essay writing. Comprehensively, CLT can be handy to teach writing, in ELT classrooms, any literary genre in English. Further, it is recommended that some communicative lessons/activities should be added into syllabus while the formulation of policy and at the time of curriculum planning.

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