

From The Viewpoints of Afghan University Lecturers, Using the Communicative Language Teaching Method to Teach and Learn English Language

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ABSTRACT

Investigating how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors at Afghan public universities felt about the application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was the aim of this study. The study used a quantitative research design that included a survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was completed by fifty Afghan EFL instructors, and the results were evaluated using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and frequency). Overall, the findings demonstrated that CLT is seen well by Afghan EFL instructors. The most favourable opinions regarding the role of students in CLT were displayed, suggesting that students firmly think that learners have a crucial role in putting CLT into practice. The role of quality/quantity of error-correction had the lowest mean. The overall findings showed that the Afghan EFL lecturers have positive perceptions about. Future research should be done, according to this study, to learn more about the opinions of Afghan EFL lecturers at both public and private universities. Teachers, students, and policymakers should all take note of the current findings. Curriculum revisions are implemented by policymakers to align with the nation's adoption of CLT.

KEYWORDS

learning and teaching English language; Communicative language method; lecturers' perception

INTRODUCTION

The profession of teaching languages began in the nineteenth century. During that period, applied linguists aimed to create guidelines for successful and efficient instruction in the then-emerging sciences of linguistics and psychology. The twentieth century saw numerous modifications to language teaching techniques as a result of advancements in methodology and changes in development. These modifications to language instruction were also influenced by historical demands on the proficiency of the students. For example, shifting the emphasis of language requirements from text comprehension to oral competence altered language and language education ideas in addition to the teaching approach (Kelly, 1969; Howatt, 1984). The 1970s saw the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching in European countries, and the 1980s saw its incorporation into English language curriculum, according to Littlewood (2007) and Ozsevik (2010). CLT is viewed as an approach as opposed to a method (Richards Jack and Rodgers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). It is believed by Nunan and Carter (2001), Richards & Renandya (2002), and Richards Jack and Rodgers (2001) that the Situational Language Teaching Approach from the 1960s served as the inspiration for CLT. The idea behind communicative language instruction, according to

Hymes (1972), Richards Jack and Rodgers (2001), and Ying (2010), is that language is meant to be used for communication. Its entire goal is to improve the students' communication skills. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was developed by European linguists who recognised that language teachers should emphasise communicative ability above language grammar knowledge.

One of the world's languages, English has been taught via a variety of methods throughout history. Several approaches have been used to teach it, including the Total Physical Response, Direct Method, Suggestopedia, Grammar-Translation Method, Audio-lingual Method, Silent Way, Community Language Teaching, Neurolinguistics Programming, Lexical Approach, Whole Language, Multiple Intelligence, and Competency-Based Language Teaching (Richards Jack & Rodgers, 2001). In today's English Language Teaching (ELT), communicative approaches are highlighted among these techniques. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is one of the communicative approaches that is widely used within the discipline of language acquisition nowadays. This approach focuses on the trainees' communicative competence. The method has been thoroughly researched in a variety of contexts including academic contexts.

The current popularity of communicative approaches in ELT has led this study to concentrate on CLT in Afghan university settings. Nevertheless, there is insufficient knowledge regarding CLT and its application to the Afghan environment. As was already established, the most popular techniques in Afghanistan these days are the grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods, with CLT being utilised sparingly in certain contexts. In conclusion, the study was carried out in response to the previously mentioned issues, which include inadequate exposure, low proficiency, large class sizes, exam-focused instruction, the prevalence of traditional methods, poverty, and war; recommendations from earlier research; a lack of knowledge about the Afghan context and meeting 21st-century needs and requirements; and an addition to Afghanistan-specific research as well as the body of study in general.

A survey questionnaire was part of the quantitative research design utilised in the research. Fifty Afghan EFL instructors completed the survey, and descriptive statistic (mean, standard deviation, and frequency) were used to analyse the results. Overall, the findings demonstrated that CLT is seen well by Afghan EFL instructors. The majority of respondents had the most positive opinions of teachers' roles in CLT, suggesting that they firmly support these roles. The role of quality/quantity of error-correction had the lowest mean. Overall results demonstrated that the Afghan EFL lecturers' opinions are favourable. Future research should be done, according to this study, to learn more about the opinions of Afghan EFL professors at both public and private universities. Teachers, students, and politicians should all take note of the current findings. Curriculum revisions are implemented by policymakers to align with the nation's adoption of CLT.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study aims to find out Afghanistan public universities' perceptions toward communicative language teaching (CLT) using in English language classroom for teaching and learning English language. The study used quantitative research designed to get data from 54 universities' lecturers all around Afghanistan through questionnaire along with purposive sampling which was analysed by SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Perceptions of Afghan EFL Lecturers towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Number of Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Overall Mean</i>
Overall Perceptions towards The Role of Learners in Learning	6	3.86	1.10	3.42
The Role of Teacher in the Classroom	4	3.70	1.24	3.42
Place/Importance of Grammar	5	3.28	1.42	3.42
Pair/Group Work	5	3.16	1.21	3.42
Quality/Quantity of Error-correction	4	3.12	1.24	3.42

The initial study inquiry was to investigate the perspectives of Afghan EFL instructors on the application of CLT at public colleges. Data were gathered using the questionnaire in order to address this research issue. Five guidelines for implementing CLT were included in this questionnaire (see Appendix B). The guiding principles are as follows: i) the significance of grammar; ii) opinions on group or pair cooperative work; iii) opinions on error-corrections; iv) the roles that teachers play in the classroom; and v) opinions on the role that students play in the classroom. Each principle has corresponding questions of different number: Principle (i) has five questions (1,3,12,17,23), principle (ii) has five questions (2,9,13,21,22), (iii) and (iv) have four questions each, items 6,10,14,15 and items 7,16,19,24 respectively, while principle (v) has six items (4,5,8,11,18,20). In total, there were 24 items in this questionnaire. The following subsections provide an explanation of the analysis conducted on each item falling under each principle. IBM SPSS Version (25) was used for data analysis and descriptive statistics calculation (mean, standard deviation, frequency). The findings indicate that, on average, each principle's mean is more than 3, indicating a neutral point and suggesting that, generally speaking, Afghan EFL instructors have favourable opinions about the application of CLT in Afghan public universities. The role of learners in learning is represented in extremely positive perceptions with a (M=3.86), while the role of the teacher in the classroom is reflected with a (M=3.70). Grammar's position and importance are ranked third (M=3.28), with pair and group work ranked fourth (M=3.16). Regarding the quality and quantity of error-correction, the lowest mean (M=3.12) was found. The subsequent section explains each of the five questionnaire concepts together with the descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and percentage of the relevant items in the order that they appear in the questionnaire.

Table 2. Percentage of Each Item from the Role of Learners

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	STD
8. The learner-centered approach to language teaching encourages responsibility and self-discipline and allows each student to develop his/her full potential.	70%	26%	4%	0%	0%	4.62	0.69
20. Tasks and activities should be negotiated and adapted to suit the students' needs rather than imposed on them.	46 %	46%	6%	2%	0%	4.36	0.69
18. For most students language is acquired most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else and not when it is studied in a direct or explicit way.	18%	35%	21%	8%	16%	3.84	0.81

11. It is impossible in a large class of students to organize your teaching so as to suit the needs of all.	30%	30%	12%	20%	8%	3.54	1.32
4. Since the learner comes to the language classroom with little or no knowledge of the language, he/she is in no position to suggest what the content of the lesson should be or what activities are useful for him/her.	14 %	26%	14%	32%	14%	2.94	1.31
5. Training learners to take responsibility for their own learning is futile since learners are not used to such an approach.	10%	32%	20%	16%	22%	2.92	1.33

If we study the table, it indicates the frequency of each item of the role of learners. It is revealed that 96 % of the respondents agreed that learner-centred approaches like CLT can contribute learners enrich their potentialities like self-discipline and responsibility and 42 % of the participant marked that it is ineffective to teach students to take charge of their own education since they are not accustomed to this kind of instruction.

Table 3. Percentage of Each Item from the Role of Teachers

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	STD
24. A textbook alone is not able to cater to all the needs and interests of the students. The teacher must supplement the textbook with other materials and tasks so as to satisfy the widely differing needs of the students.	56%	34%	4%	6%	0%	4.4	0.83
16. The teacher as transmitter of knowledge is only one of the many different roles he/she must perform during the course of a lesson	28%	48%	16%	6%	2%	3.94	0.93
19. The role of the teacher in the language classroom is to impart knowledge through activities such as explanation, writing, and example.	16%	52%	18%	10%	4%	3.66	1.0
7. The teacher as "authority" and "instructor" is no longer adequate to describe the teacher's role in the language classroom.	28 %	28%	22%	14%	8%	3.46	1.35

According to the table, 90% of participants believed that a textbook cannot satisfy every student's demand or interest on its own. While 56% of respondents feel that the teacher's function as "authority" and "instructor" is no longer adequate to describe the teacher's role in the language classroom, the teacher must complement the textbook with other resources and exercises in order to satisfy the greatly divergent needs of the pupils.

Table 4. Percentage of Grammar Role Perceptions in Each Item

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	STD
12. Knowledge of the rules of a language does not guarantee ability to use the language.	20%	50%	20%	8%	2%	3.78	0.93
3. Grammar should be taught only as a means to an end and not as an end in itself.	18%	46%	24%	12%	0%	3.70	0.90

23. Direct instruction in the rules and terminology of grammar is essential if students are to learn to communicate effectively	10%	30%	24%	16%	20%	2.94	1.30
1. Grammatical correctness is the most important criterion by which language performance should be judged	6 %	28%	20%	34%	12%	2.82	1.15
17. By mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable of communicating with a native speaker	8%	18%	16%	38%	20%	2.56	1.23

The table showcases that 70% of the participants agreed with that Knowledge of the rules of a language does not guarantee ability to use the language on the other hand 26% of the respondents showed their agreement that by mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable of communicating with a native speaker.

Table 5. Percentage of Perceptions about Pair/group Work Role in Each Item

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	STD
2. Group work activities are essential in providing opportunities for co-operative relationships to emerge and in promoting genuine interaction among students.	72 %	20%	4%	2%	2%	4.58	0.83
9. Group work allows students to explore problems for themselves and thus have some measure of control over their own learning. It is therefore an invaluable means of organizing classroom experiences.	46%	28%	12%	12%	2%	4.0	1.12
22. Group work activities have little use since it is very difficult for the teacher to monitor the students' performance and prevent them from using their mother tongue.	8%	26%	12 %	38%	16%	2.72	1.24
21. Students do their best when taught as a whole class by the teacher. Small group work may occasionally be useful to vary the routine, but it can never replace sound formal instruction by a competent teacher.	2%	26%	12%	46%	14%	2.56	1.09
13. Group work activities take too long to organize and waste a lot of valuable teaching time.	16%	8%	10%	44%	22%	2.52	1.35

According to the table, 22% of respondents feel that group work activities take too long to organise and waste a lot of valuable teaching time, while 92% of respondents agreed that group work activities are essential in giving opportunities for co-operative relationships to emerge and in promoting genuine interaction among students.

Table 6. Findings on Perceptions about Error-Correction

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	STD
6. For students to become effective communicators in the foreign language, the teacher's feedback must be focused on the appropriateness and not the linguistic form of the students' response.	26 %	46%	16%	8%	4%	3.82	1.04
14. Since errors are a normal part of learning, much correction is wasteful of time.	14%	36%	20%	26%	4%	3.30	1.12

15. The Communicative approach to language teaching produces fluent but inaccurate learners.	6%	26%	18%	36%	14%	2.74	1.17
10. The teacher should correct all the grammatical errors students make. If errors are ignored, this will result in imperfect learning.	8%	24%	10%	38%	20%	2.62	1.27

Looking at the above table, we can see that 72% of the participants felt that teachers' comments should be centred on the appropriateness of students' responses rather than their linguistic form if they want their pupils to become proficient communicators in the foreign language. However, 32% indicated that they agreed with All of the students' grammatical mistakes should be fixed by the teacher. Inaccurate learning will occur if mistakes are overlooked.

The study aims to explore the perspectives of Afghan English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors on the application of CLT in English language instruction in Afghan public colleges. Both questionnaires were used to gather data, and the results are presented in the preceding sections. Finding out how Afghan EFL instructors felt about CLT's deployment at public colleges was the main research topic for this study. The overall results show that, for the following reasons, Afghan EFL lecturers have positive opinions regarding the use of CLT in English language instruction.

First, it might have to do with the outdated, traditional approaches of teaching English, which make CLT a viable alternative in this day and age where communication in English is essential for survival. According to Hu (2002), English is a widely used language for communication in a variety of spheres of human endeavour, including politics, economics, education, society, and culture. With CLT, it is quite possible for pupils to receive this communication training. Second, the strong interest that Afghan EFL instructors have shown in CLT suggests that these instructors are intimidated by the use of antiquated, long-used traditional methods (Hikmat, 2009).

Thirdly, the study found that 46% of the respondents had their schooling overseas. This is a significant percentage because, previously, EFL professors were not frequently sent abroad for postgraduate work. Drawing from their personal experiences and insights from foreign settings, these recently qualified foreign professors may have interacted with CLT and recognised its potential as a tool for assisting Afghan students in acquiring and enhancing their language abilities. Fourth, as stated in the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2010-2014 for Afghanistan, plans were made to implement English as the medium of instruction by the end of 2015 (Alamyar, 2017). However, these plans were not carried out as a result of low student proficiency, so lecturers are likely now motivated to work towards that goal so that in the future, should the decision to resurrect English as the medium of instruction in Afghanistan be made, students will have the appropriate level of English language proficiency that could enable them to perform well in the new learning environment. Furthermore, they might support standardisation that incorporates 21st century abilities like teamwork, leadership, interpersonal interaction, and so on, which can be acquired through CLT application.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to ascertain how Afghan public universities' EFL classes perceived the use of CLT. A survey questionnaire was utilised to gather information from fifty EFL instructors, and SPSS was used for analysis. Descriptive statistics for this questionnaire yielded information that the total mean is 3.42. This suggests that all of the

questionnaire's items were positively viewed by Afghan EFL lecturers. The role that students play in the application of CLT, or in the classroom, is viewed most favourably by the lecturers. Error-correction was one of the items with the lowest positive perception, suggesting that EFL lecturers are aware that error-correction shouldn't be a primary focus when implementing CLT. To put it briefly, no unfavourable opinion was expressed regarding any of the questionnaire's items.

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