



## Effects of Communicative Strategies and Writing Skills on Students' Learning at Secondary level In Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

*The study examines the effects of communicative strategies and writing skills on students learning at secondary level in Pakistan. The study is experimental in nature and the researcher applied a pre-test post-test equivalent group experimental design to draw the conclusion. For the facilitation of study, the researcher presumed the male students of grade 10 studying at Government Higher Secondary School Renala Khurd. Government Higher Secondary School Renala Khurd was selected as population in Okara district as the spot for intervention. The selection of the students was made through convenience and informed consent which tantamounted to simple random sampling technique. Experimental group and control group comprised of thirty students each as such sample size for this experimental study was stretched over 60 students. The experimental group was exposed to communicate through communicative language teaching-based activities included in the (NECL, 2006) for grade 10 while the control group was imparted intervention through traditional methods for two months.*



### Introduction

Pakistani students and teachers have serious concerns about the teaching of the English language. The teaching strategies are far from being satisfactory in the present scenario. The national curriculum for English language grade 10 in Pakistan proposes English language for a better career, higher learning, and international communication. Currently, the world has squeezed into a global village as such English language proficiency in oral communication and writing skills has become inevitable to enhance individual success and access to the world knowledge realms. The students of the English language are escalating day by day (Rahman, 2001). Many institutions are deciding to facilitate the students in public sectors. Social and broadcast media are playing their vital role in progression of the English language. In view of the diverse nature of students, English language teachers use different methods such as traditional methods like grammar-translation method, direct method, and audio-lingual method. But instead of these measures, the failure and dropout ratio of students at the secondary level is startling (Imtiaz, 2014).

It is the general contention that CLT surfaced in the 1970s. But it could find space in the national curriculum for the English language (NCEL, 2006) up to the secondary level. This occupancy of space proclaimed to enhance oral proficiency, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills as well. The CLT-based activities were included in the shape of role plays, discussion, dialogues, conversations, and presentation skills (NCEL 2006). But it is observed that these activities were not implemented efficiently in the classroom interaction (Schmenk, 2017).

English language learners are confronted with multifarious acute problems at the secondary level. Despite efforts, the results of English as a subject are disappointing. In the examination scenario the failure in English as a subject means failure in all other subjects. Elevated-rate of failure in English as a subject affects the students in three ways: firstly failure in English as a subject destroys their chances to get white-collared jobs both for money and respect Secondly, students lose their moral ground to study further. It is also observed that students at the secondary level in Pakistan exhibit poor oral communication and writing skills. Thirdly weakness in the English language affects the performance of students in other subjects too (Panhwar *et al*, 2017). There seems inadequate research on the implementation of CLT-based activities in the real classroom situation in public sector school education in Pakistan. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of communicative strategies on students learning in English at the secondary level. The present study pursued to explore the answers to the following research questions ( Alam & Bashirud din, 2013).

### **1.1 Research questions**

- 1 What is the effect of communicative strategies on oral communication?
- 2 What way communicative strategies affect the writing skills of students?

### **2. Literature review**

The process of language learning takes place successfully where the language learners are engaged in meaningful interaction in second language learning rather than simply emphasize on the teaching of grammar rules. The origin and concept of communicative strategy looks like a teaching strategy. Chomsky (1957) presented the famous theory of language learning named competence and performance. Holliday (1970) suggested the conceptual basis of the CLT strategy. Hymes (1972) a North American constructed the theoretical basis of CLT strategy. He had a contention that the language method does not mean to describe the rules of grammar, therefore the researcher clarified that knowledge of the language should describe, how to use the language through communicative competence. Wilkins (1976) proposed theory notions and functions. It reinforced Hymes's idea that language could not be explained through grammar rules and syntax. Besides this, it should be explained through real interaction. Brumfit and Christopher (1984) came up and described that CLT strategy should be used for communicative purposes, meanings were also considered important. Richard and Rodgers (2001) had a viewpoint that fluency is important than accuracy in language learning.

Communicative language teaching is a revolt against the situational approach, audio-lingual method, grammar-translation method, and direct method. European common market was established in those days. Many emigrants migrated to Europe to do work for personal affairs. Those linguists had a viewpoint that students of foreign language were unable to grasp the English language in the true sense. The students were lacking communication by using proper social language, language signs of expression, and demonstration of the language through gestures in a brief reply (Spada, 2007).

#### **2.1 Communicative Language Teaching**

CLT approach gave importance to classroom objectives and these objectives are not confined to linguistic or grammatical competence. It involved the students exercise of practical, accurate, and purposeful activities to achieve the mandatory goals. Fluency and accuracy were taken as compulsory components in CLT strategy. At times fluency was given more importance than accuracy. It made the students involved in the use of language. This approach inspired the students to ultimately use the foreign language productively and receptively (Brown, 2007).

#### **2.2 The Weak and Strong Version of CLT**

Ahmad and Rao (2013) described strong and weak versions of CLT strategy. The strong version claimed that it not only activated the existing knowledge of students besides it also activated the inert knowledge and stimulated foreign language learners' process. The weak version of CLT focused on to provide the opportunity to students to use the English language for communicative purposes. The weak version should integrate CLT-based activities to transform a wider program of language acquisition.

#### **2.3 Traditional Methods of Teachings**

Awan and Shafi (2016) acknowledged that traditional methods like the grammar-translation method being the most effective teaching method is used in developing countries like Pakistan. Initially, traditional methods were used to teach classical languages like Greek and Latin in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Traditional methods focused on to learn grammar rules intensively, memorization of sentence making structure, vocabulary, and literature, reading and writing skills. Chang and Goswami (2011) argued that GMT proved a more successful method than CLT strategy in the teaching of foreign languages in Taiwan.

## 2.4 Comparison of the Effects of CLT and Traditional Strategies

Communicative language methods and traditional teaching methods are clear in their implementation procedure. Miskimmon *et al* (2014) are of the view that the interaction process in the classroom is controlled by the teacher and there is the least participation from the students side while in CLT strategy, the teacher acts as a facilitator, students are personally reinvigorated to take part in the interaction. Furthermore, CLT motivates the students to express themselves individually instead there is no such principle in traditional methods. The class teacher translates the target language material into the native language. Students use their mother language frequently while in CLT strategy students are allowed to use mother language at particular occasions and circumstances. Fluency-based activities are supported in CLT strategy and students' errors are ignored, teacher makes them correct through accuracy-based activities while written answers are given importance, the class teacher-focus to guide the students in the shape of transcribed corrections. Villacis Villacis (2018) considered CLT a famous strategy for the teaching of foreign languages besides these traditional teaching methods which are considered teacher centered. Language teacher performs as a competent authority to make available information and students work as receptors. CLT develops more social relationships between the teacher and taught. It provides a sense of ownership to students in the learning process.

Ahmed and Rao (2013) remarked on the usefulness of communicative language teaching and its impact on the students' attitude and achievement. This experimental study tested student's improvement in comprehension, essay writing, vocabulary, and speaking skills. The qualitative part of this research examined the attitude of teachers towards the practical implementation of CLT strategy in the Pakistani context, where traditional methods like the GTM method are mostly used. Both the phases of this experimental study suggested the idea that teachers, as well as students, could alter their focus from traditional methods towards newer and effective strategies such as CLT-based teaching.

Lee (2014) conducted a study in South Korea on the appropriateness of CLT strategy in English as a second language context. The researcher recommended that there is a social need to implement the contextual aspects, rather than to implement the CLT approach as a complete strategy. The contextual aspects of CLT include learner behavior towards the target language, cultural values, expectations of society, and norms, such elements often play a more important role than the method of teaching. According to Frewan (2015), most of the research scholars agreed that CLT seemed a kind of theory used for communication in a foreign language. It is also used as a strategy for classroom instruction to promote students' communicative competence.

Khan *et al* (2016) conducted an experimental study to examine the effectiveness of communicative language teaching in public sector colleges of Pakistan. This study examined improvement in comprehension level and writing skills of intermediate-level students. Pre-test and post-test were conducted to measure improvement in student's learning. The results of this study showed significant improvement in comprehension level and writing skills of students. Tarranum and Majoka (2017) scrutinized the effect of the communicative approach to teaching on male and female students. The researcher used pre-test, post-test equivalent group design for this experimental study. The control group was treated under traditional teaching situations while the experimental group was treated under communicative strategies for twelve weeks. The results indicated a significant effect of the communicative approach on both male and female students' retention of learned material.

According to Panhwar *et al* (2017) Communicative language teaching is widely implemented as a teaching strategy in developed countries. Contrarily, Sakui (2004) argued that the practical implication of communicative language teaching in developing countries seems rare and complicated. CLT depicts western learning values and culture, therefore the implementation of CLT in developing countries appears a complex phenomenon.

## 3. Methods and Procedure of Research

### 3.1 Design of the study

The rationale of this paper was to examine the effects of communicative strategies and writing skills on students learning at the secondary level. The researcher used "pre-test post-test equivalent group experimental design" adopted from Watenable *et al* (1984). The researcher divided the participants into two groups through convenience sampling technique. Those participants were taught for two months by using traditional methods and communicative strategies. The researcher applied a teacher-made pre-test to equate and form the experimental and control group. This experimental design determined the proficiency level of students in oral communication and writing skills at the secondary level students. The researcher also consulted expert teachers of the English language at the secondary level to authenticate the material of pre-test and post-test in terms of relevance with the intent of research, placement and organization of content. On

the completion of treatment, a teacher-made post-test, similar in the difficulty level with that of pre-test was administered to measure the achievement of control and experimental group taught with communicative and traditional strategies. The material of pre-test and post-tests were comprised of oral communication and writing skills included in the grade 10 (NCEL, 2006).

### 3.2 THE POPULATION OF THE STUDY

This paper aimed to examine “Effects of communicative strategies and writing skills on students’ learning at secondary level”. Therefore, male students studying at the secondary level in district Okara were taken as the population of the study. Secondary education has great importance in Pakistan. Furthermore, students find themselves unable to communicate in the English language.

### 3.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

the researcher used pre-test and post-test as data collection instrument accordance with the national curriculum for English language (NCEL, 2006) grade 10. English language served as the foundation to proceed by developing administering and evaluating tests in this study. This experimental study also presented a continuum of the students’ curricular activities in English subjects. The present study aimed not to waste students’ time for the preparations for their final exams. In pre-test and post-test, the participants were tested for oral communication and writing skills included in their English syllabus. The researcher in consultation with expert teachers in English at the secondary level identified eight units from the grade 10 English textbook.

### 3.4 RELIABILITY OF THE TESTS

The term reliability refers to the consistency of the results. The researcher used split half method (odd-even) to test the reliability of pre-test and post-test results. Spearman Brown prophecy formula was applied to examine the reliability for the pre-test, post-test scores. To draw the conclusions, the individual halves of the pre-test and post-test were compared.

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

### 3.5 VALIDITY OF THE TEST ITEMS

It refers to the accuracy of test items result. If the reliability of the test-item is to be established once, the validity of test-items can be determined. The researcher prepared pre-test, post-test on the basis of syllabus prescribed in (NCEL, 2006) grade 10 students. Following units of grade 10 students were selected with the consultation of class teacher and expert teachers in English subject at secondary level.

- Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) an embodiment of justice.
- Chinese New Year.
- Try again.
- First Aid.
- The Rain (poem)
- Television vs. News Papers.
- Little by little one walks far.
- Faithfulness.

The researcher developed pre-test, post-test based on CLT strategies in the above mentioned units of the grade 10 (NCEL, 2006). There were ten questions, containing 10 marks each. CLT based subjective and objective questions were included in the test to examine the students such as group discussion, Expression to show anger / apology, Answer/ Question from the textbook material. Review of poems, Ask and give directions, Interviews, Agree and Disagree, Asking and Responding, Multiple choices according to text book material and choose the correct option according to the grammar. All the selected items in pre-test, Post-test followed the principles and technique set by NCEL (2006) at secondary level. Pre-test, post-test items were equal in difficulty level. The researcher measured the test items and found that all the text items in pre-test, post-test were same in difficulty level. Opinions, consents of the class teacher and English subject experts were also taken into account seriously in test construction.

### 3.6 COLLECTION OF DATA

the main focus of the present paper was to explore the effects of communicative strategies on students learning in English at secondary level. After the completion of two-month treatment period, a teacher made post-test on the pattern of NCEL (2006) was administered to enumerate the achievement scores of the control and experimental group. It has been already pointed out that data collection in this experimental research was done out of the achievement scores of the following groups i.e. the achievement scores of pre-tests of 10<sup>th</sup> class students, the scores of post-tests of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in control group and the achievement scores of post-tests of the grade 10 students in experimental group.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

The inclination of this paper is towards finding the effects of communicative strategies and writing skills on students learning at secondary level. The researcher analyzed (i) students' performance in control and the experimental group made the basis of the performance in pre-test (ii) comparison of the students in control and the experimental group made basis on performance in post-test (iii) effects of CLT on the performance of the students is analyzed in control and experimental groups.

### 4. Presentation and analysis of data

The aim of this paper to find the effects of communicative strategies and writing skills on students learning in English at secondary level. The researcher analyzed (i) comparison of the students in control and experimental group is made based on the performance in pre-test (ii) comparison of the students in control and experimental group is made based on the performance in post-test (iii) effect of CLT on the performance of the students is analyzed in control and experimental groups (iv) effect of CLT on the performance of low achievers and high achievers is analyzed.

#### 4.1 COMPARISON OF SCORES IN PRE-TESTS OF CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUP.

$H_0$ : Performance of both groups is same on pre-test

$H_1$ : Performance of both groups is not same on pre-test

**Table 4.1: Descriptive measures and testing of hypothesis in pre-tests C.G and E.G**

Group	Size	Mean	Variance	SD	Pooled SD	f	t-statistic	p-value
Control	30	52.9	409.06	20.23	20.13	8	0.167	.868
Experimental	30	53.8	401.08	20.03				

#### Description

*P-value* in the above table is greater than .025 (.868 > .025). There is no considerable difference between the scores of experimental and control group students, so it is concluded that the performance of students in pre-tests is same in the control and experimental group.

#### 4.2 COMPARISON OF SCORES IN POST-TESTS OF CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

$H_0$ : Performance of both groups is same on post-test

$H_1$ : Performance of both groups is not same on post-test

**Table 4.2: Descriptive measures and testing of hypothesis in post-tests of C.G and E.G**

Group	Size	Mean	Variance	SD	Polled SD	f	t-statistic	p-value
Control	30	60.1	436.34	20.89	19.85	8	0.962	.345
Experimental	30	65.0	351.86	18.76				

#### Description

*P-value* in the above table is greater than .025 (.345 > .025). There is no considerable difference between the scores of the control and experimental group, so it is concluded that the scores of students in post-tests are the same in both groups.

#### 4.3 COMPARISON OF SCORES UNDER TRADITIONAL AND CLT IN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

$H_0$ : CLT has no impact on English learning in control group.

$H_1$ ; CLT has impact on English learning in control group.

**Table 4.3: Descriptive measures and testing of hypothesis in traditional and CLT in E.G**

Group	Size	Mean	Variance	SD	f	t-statistic	p-value
Pre-test	30	53.8	421.08	20.52	.9	16.257	.000
Post-test	30	65.0	351.86	18.76			
Difference		11.2	14.32	3.78			

**Description**

*P-value* in this table is less than .025 (.000 < .025). It is revealed that the performances of students studied under CLT are better than traditional strategies in the experimental group.

**4.4 Reliability of pre-tests**

$$r = 1 - \frac{6(5532.5 + 99)}{60(60^2 - 1)} = 0.84$$

$$reliability = \frac{2r}{1 + r}$$

$$reliability\ of\ pre - test = \frac{2 * 0.84}{1 + 0.84} = 0.91$$

**Description**

It was analyzed that the coefficient of correlation of control group pre-test was 0.91 It indicated that there was a high degree of correlation in control group pre-test, items scores.

**4.5 Reliability of post-test**

$$reliability = \frac{2r}{1 + r}$$

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

$$r = 1 - \frac{6(6722.75)}{60(60^2 - 1)}$$

$$r = 1 - \frac{40336.5}{215940} = 0.81$$

$$reliability\ of\ post - test = \frac{2(0.81)}{1 + 0.81} = 0.90$$

**Description**

It was analyzed that the coefficient of correlation of control group post-test was 0.90 It indicated that there was a high degree of correlation in control group post-test, items scores.

**5. Discussion**

The present study was experimental in nature. It was organized to examine the effects of communicative strategies and writing skills on students learning at the secondary level. English is studied as a compulsory subject in Pakistan. The teaching of the English language is an important feature in the educational curriculum in Pakistan. This study traced improvement in oral communication and writing skills of secondary level students. The Objectives of the study were given as: (1) What is the effect communicative strategies on oral communication. (2) What way communicative strategies affect the writing skills of students. The data elicited from the experimental nature of the current study has shown that CLT-based strategies proved beneficial and superior to traditional methods. Such as the researcher traced definite improvement in comparison of test scores of control and experimental group in pre-test, comparison of scores in post-test of control and experimental group and comparison of achievement scores under traditional and communicative language teaching in experimental group. The researcher utilized pre-test and post-test as data collection paradigm. The reliability level of pre-test and post-tests items were 0.84 and 0.90 respectively. The results showed significant improvement in the oral communication and writing skills after intervention. The study revealed that communicative strategies proved better for the teaching of English language as subjects. It was recommended that English language teachers may use communicative strategies to enhance students' oral communication and writing skills. The current study helped to identify the strong and weak versions of the CLT strategy. Awan et al (2016) acknowledged the reality that traditional teaching methods are the effective teaching methods applied in developing countries like Pakistan. As Miskimmon et al (2014) differentiate traditional methods, the process of interaction is controlled by the class teacher and there is the

least participation of students while in CLT strategy, the role of the teacher works as a facilitator, students are personally motivated and encouraged to take part in the interaction. Ahmad and Rao (2013) commented and traced students' improvement in comprehension, essay writing, vocabulary, and speaking skills. Lee (2014) advocated implementing the contextual aspect, rather than implementing CLT as a complete approach. The contextual aspects of CLT include, students' behavior towards the target language, cultural values, expectations of society, norms often play an important role.

## 6. Conclusion

The result of this experimental study indicated that communicative strategies proved better for the teaching of English language at the secondary level. Most teachers were using traditional methods like grammar-translation method, direct method, and audio-lingual method; they may apply communicative strategies to enhance students' oral communication and writing skills. This study not only found that CLT has potential in teaching the English language. CLT is based on student-centered activities, form-focused suggests classroom instructions and provides self-assessment opportunities to students. The results remained consistent with the past studies conducted by (Chang & Goswami 2011; Ahmad & Rao, 2013, Lee, 2014; Frewan, 2015; Khan et al 2016; Tarranum & Majoka, 2017; Panhwar et al 2017). Traditional teaching methods including lecture-based and GTM could only support the students to learn the narrative and reproduce the text without cognitive development while students studied in experimental situations exhibited a better understanding of communicative and writing skills in post-test results. The practical implication of CLT strategy in the Pakistani context needs special teacher training programs for English language teachers on regular basis.

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