Effect of ICTs Supported Communicative Grammar Translation Model on Students' English Language Learning: A Formative Assessment

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Abstract

This experimental study explored the effect of Information and Communication Technologies supported Communicative Grammar Translation model on formative assessment of students' English language learning skills at undergraduate level. One hundred and sixteen students were divided into three groups by equal mean score in pre-test. The three groups were taught through three different methodologies for whole semester. The first group was provided instructions through Traditional method, the second group was taught through Communicative Grammar Translation model and the third group was taught through Information and Communication Technologies supported Communicative Grammar Translation model. For observing their progress, four progress tests (Grammar, writing, reading and listening) in the form of formative assessment were carried out during the semester. The findings depicted that students taught by Information and Communication Technologies supported Communicative Grammar Translation model outperformed the students of Communicative Grammar Translation model and Traditional Method in reading, and listening skills. However, there was not any significant difference between the groups taught by Traditional Method, Communicative Grammar Translation model and Information and Communication Technologies supported Communicative Grammar Translation model on grammar skills that depicted the significance of traditional method in grammar learning. The findings of this study have implication for English as a Second Language teaching at different levels, as Information and Communication Technologies supported Communicative Grammar Translation model has not only maintained the strengths of Traditional Method and Communicative Grammar Translation model but it has demonstrated its improved effects in contrast to the weaknesses of these models of teaching during formative assessment.

1. Introduction and Background

Formative assessment aims at supporting learning by minimizing the difference between individual existing knowledge and desired learning objectives while teaching learning process is taking place (Bell & Cowie, 2000; Erickson, 2007; NRC, 2001). Formative assessment presents flawless information to take decisions appropriate to teaching learning by working at a minute level. Black and Wiliam (1998a) describe formative assessment as actions carried out either by teacher or student providing information in the form of feedback to change and transform teaching

learning activities. It has got popularity because of its function as developing individual's abilities in various learning contexts (Bennett, 2011; Kingston & Nash, 2012).

The students who have come from various educational backgrounds and socio economic status (Harrison & Krol, 2007) require language support for understanding and proficiency in language acquisition. They need to learn all four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) of language learning (Ybarra & Green, 2003). In traditional approaches like Grammar Translation (GT) method, the teacher carries dominant role and tries to make students memorize factual knowledge. Therefore, students become passive listeners in this environment (Gibson, Callaham, Harder,& Orlich, 1998).The Grammar Translation Method was originally used to teach Latin and Greek languages (Chastain, 1988) and it was believed that students would have a complete command of the grammar of the native language through the study of the grammar of target language. Mattioli (2004) considered the use of first language in classrooms as a vital tool for socio-cognitive processes and it helps to promote an encouraging environment in the classroom. Translation can contribute to the students' acquisition of the target language. Translation plays a positive role in language learning and facilitates the language learning process (Mart, 2013). Moreover vocabulary acquisition is enhanced through translation (Min & Hsu, 2008).

The traditional GT method was criticized for conceiving grammar as an end, not as a means (Demircan, 1990). One of the major drawbacks of GT is that the aesthetics of the language is generally ignored due to its negligence of the functional aspects of the language. This method focuses and emphasizes mainly on the learning of grammar rule and vocabulary, while ignores the listening and speaking skills. While for writing skills, students are mainly dependent on grammar rules and continuously translating ideas from their native language and in reading skills produces habits indicative of deciphering and not of reading (Tyler, 2008).

Communicative Approach (CA) was evolved as the substitute of structural and Grammar Translation method and later it became maxim for English Language teaching (ELT) methodology (Benson & Voller, 1997). Communicative competence is the common notion affiliated with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Linguists started working on it considering it inevitable part of language learning. The great shift in language pedagogy from traditional models to communicative models concentrate on communicative aspect of language, as necessary for globalised world (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Benson & Voller, 1997). With the emphasis of communicative competence, the communicative language teaching enables students to practice language in real learning settings (Canale &Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972). It has immediate effect and aspires zeal and captures everyone's attention to its communicative functions (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). One of the fundamental principles of CLT is that learners are required to be involved in significant communication to accomplish communicative fluency in ESL settings (Wen Wu, 2008).

On the other hand, the critics argue that CLT is an inappropriate methodology in those cultural contexts, where the teacher is regarded as a fountain of wisdom, and where accuracy is valued higher than fluency (Thornbury, 2003). The Communicative Approach has sometimes been seen as having eroded the explicit teaching of grammar with a consequent loss among students in accuracy in the pursuit of fluency (Harmer, 2008). Ellis (1994) remarked about CA that the class

size, grammar-based examinations, and lack of exposure to authentic language as constraints in using communicative language approach.

The first language acquisition takes place by encountering with actual sentences, while this feature of language acquisition is missing in second language learning. For example, if a Spanish student listens to the English conversation, he/she will notice that English sentences are not subject less as in Spanish (Cook, 1991). In foreign language teaching, translation may be used, for instance, as a means of conveying the meaning of a word, a phrase logical group, a grammar form, or a sentence pattern. During the last decades of the 19th century and start of 20th century, direct methods of teaching English evolved. These methods were widely accepted and eliminated translation method in foreign language teaching. Later on translation, as a way of conveying the meaning of language units was admitted in foreign language by Palmer's and West's work (Rogova, 1975). Brown (2001) sheds light on the basic reason for continuing the use of these methods by outlining that: "It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored. Many standardized tests of foreign languages still do not attempt to tap into communicative abilities, so students have little motivation to go beyond grammar analogies, translations, and rote exercises".

It was outlined by Jesa (2005) that an atmosphere of approval is created for the non-English speaking learners by allowing an optimistic approach into restricted use of native language in the English classroom. There are many different methodologies towards teaching which range from teacher-centred to student-centred approach which have evolved over time. The use of student-centred approach along with advanced communicative methods of teaching is emphasized in teacher education courses. As different learners have different learning styles and different models have their own strong and weak points, the necessity for the benefit of the learner is to integrate these models into a reasonable and efficient teaching program (Hutchinson & Waters, 1993).

In the similar context, a model was developed to teach English at FA/FSc level in Pakistan by integrating Grammar Translation method with Communicative Approach, called Communicative Grammar Translation (CGT) model (Fazal, 2011). CGT model is amalgam of Grammar Translation method and Communicative Approach, which utilizes learners' first language for better comprehension of the second language, and highlights the positive aspects of both methodologies and minimizes their weaknesses. The strength of GT method lies in teaching of grammar; thus enhancing grammatical competence blends with CA that has the element of communicative competence (Chang, 2011; Istiaque, 2008). The CGT model passed through various stages of development and keeping in view the aspects of Instructional Design model before implementation in the class. The fusion of grammar translation with communicative approach generated better results for L2 learners at FSc (part II) level.

According to Garrett (1991), the inclusion of ICTs in teaching and learning process is not a single method but an umbrella where different methods and approaches with different philosophical perspectives may be applied. A variety of ICT applications can be amalgamated in teaching language (Yunus, Lubis,& Lin, 2009). The gap between theory and practice may be removed from computer mediated learning, which creates more opportunities (Shield & Weininger, 2004) for learning language inside and outside the classroom (Blake, 2000; Warschauer, 1997) by transforming learning process in to twenty four hours activity, having more exposure to target

language (Blake, 2000; Campbell, 2004; Lightbown & Spada, 1999). By considering the significance of ICTs, CGT model was further enhanced by integrating ICTs in the model and validated through Delphi technique[11] before implementation at undergraduate (BS-Hons, Semester 1) level. The current study reports the impact of CGTI model on formative assessment of language learning skills.

1.1 Objectives
The main objective of the study was to explore the effect of Information and Communication technologies (ICTs) supported Communicative Grammar Translation model (CGTI) on formative assessment of students' English language learning skills.

1.2 Hypotheses
The following hypotheses were formed to address the objective of the study.

1. There is no significant difference among mean grammar score of students taught by TM, CGT and CGTI in formative assessment.
2. There is no significant difference among mean writing score of students taught by TM, CGT and CGTI in formative assessment.
3. There is no significant difference among mean reading score of students taught by TM, CGT and CGTI in formative assessment.
4. There is no significant difference among mean listening score of students taught by TM, CGT and CGTI in formative assessment.

2. Literature Review
In formative assessment of English language learners, information about learners' current knowledge level enable teachers to continue as well as involve learner in teaching learning process effectively. For making appropriate instructional choices, English language teacher must have progress tests as formative assessment to take information about students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing capabilities for fostering learning. It is important that the teacher can utilize progress tests data to structure and plan further learning (Shepard, 2005). According to Abedi (2010), sufficient knowledge about level of learners' English proficiency is vital for designing suitable assessment procedures. The classroom teacher is better examiner of target language use in English language learning as compared to external experts conducting such process. Teacher should apply formative procedure on regular basis to accumulate information regarding language capabilities. It is suggested that unnecessary difficult terms, high level vocabulary and difficult grammatical structures be avoided in formative assessment of writing skills. For speaking tests, it is helpful to use relatively difficult language, i.e. a level above the learner's current knowledge (Trumbull & Solano-Flores, 2011).

After analyzing recent researches on formative assessment, it has been realised that considerable emphasis on formative assessment improves students' learning (Shepard, 2005; Marzano & Haystead, 2008). The well-designed formative assessment activities indicate dynamic teaching and learning and reflect the requirement of learners (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall &William, 2004;

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[11]The Delphi technique is designed to work as a group communication process that works towards conducting detailed examinations and discussions of a specific issue for the purpose of goal setting, policy investigation, or predicting the occurrence of future events (Ulschak, 1983; Turoff & Hiltz, 1996; Ludwig, 1997).

Reeves, 2007; Thompson & Wiliam, 2007). It gives opportunity to students to assess their own learning and facilitate them to achieve overall objectives of lesson. It assists teachers in recognizing students with special needs and facilitates students by enhancing learners' enthusiasm, self-realization, self-reliance, developing confidence and critical thinking skills. It also improves skills to relate old knowledge with new and increases understanding (Cauley & McMillanm, 2010; Shute, 2008).

Feedback is an important element in formative assessment of English language learners (Boyd & Richerson, 2005) as it decreases the gap between their present level of learning and intended learning goals (Wiliam, 2012). Students' completion of task in writing and speaking skills clearly indicate their level of understanding. There is considerable role of both students and teacher in formative assessment and the various forms of feedback given by teacher develops students' language and intellectual abilities; thus enhancing their achievement (Heritage, 2013). Trumbull and Gerzon (2013) stresses the need of professional development of teachers to apply formative assessment practices effectively with English language learners on daily basis.

3. Methodology

In order to test the hypotheses, true experimental study was conducted. One hundred and twenty students of BS (Hons) from department of Management Sciences, Hazara University, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were selected for the study. But one hundred and sixteen students took the pre-test and participated in the whole study. The pre-test was taken in all four skills of language learning in addition to grammar. The students were randomly divided into three groups on the basis of equal mean scores obtained in the pre-test. First group was termed as Control group, second group was called Experimental group I and third group Experimental group II.

One group was taught with traditional method (TM) prevalent in the university, second group was taught with Communicative Grammar Translation Model (CGT) and third group was taught with ICTs supported CGT model (CGTI). Three different teachers having same teaching experience at university level taught the three groups similar content. The teachers had first meeting before commencement of the semester about content and assessment. Then they had regular meeting after every week to discuss the on-going progress. The permission was obtained from the chairman of the department and consent was also taken from the students for the participation in the study. Time table was then arranged for the three groups; hence they were taught at similar time by different teachers. The progress of three groups was measured through formative assessment with three weeks interval in grammar, writing, reading and listening skills of language learning.

3.1 Population and Sample

All the first year students enrolled in Bachelor program of 1st semester of Hazara University, Pakistan constituted the population of the study. The population of the study was 658 students enrolled in Bachelor Programs of 1st semester in Fall-2012 in the university. One hundred and twenty students of BS (Hons), Department of Management Sciences were selected for the study. The four students did not participate in the pre-test; therefore one hundred and sixteen students served as sample of the study. Matched Random sampling was used for the study. The students were first matched with the score taken in the Pre-test and then they were individually assigned randomly to three groups on the basis of equal mean scores in the pre-test. Due to mortality rate in the experiment the number of students are not equal in all tests for formative assessment. For the

first and last progress test taken as formative assessment, the sample of the study remained 116 students, while for the second and third progress test the sample of the students were 111 and 109 respectively.

3.2 Research instrument

For the formative assessment measuring teaching and learning progress, four progress tests (grammar, writing, reading and listening) were developed. Each progress test was of 15 marks. For grammar test, the items were twenty and each item carried one mark. For writing skills, letter was given; for reading skills, reading comprehension passage was given. For listening skills, first fifteen items were taken from Cambridge IELTS book, test 1(Listening, 2005). The validity of all four tests were confirmed by experts in English language teaching at university level. Minor errors were omitted and tests were improved except listening. The reliability of every test was calculated through Cronbach alpha in SPSS version 21. The reliability of grammar test was .71, writing .69, reading .76 and listening .78.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected as the semester progresses and formative assessment was taken to check the progress. Four tests measuring Grammar, writing, reading and listening with duration of three weeks were taken from three groups.

The collected data was analysed through SPSS version 21. Descriptive as well as inferential statistics were applied. ANOVA and Post-hoc were measured to compare the effect of CGTI model on four skills of language learning through formative assessment.

4. Results

The results of progress tests taken as formative assessment are described in the following tables.

Table 1: **Comparison of Groups through ANOVA on progress tests**$*P<0.05$

	Progress Test	Control group (TM)			Experimental group 1(CGT)			Experimental group 2 (CGTI)				
	Skill	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	F	p
I	Grammar	4.10	0.50	38	4.07	0.94	38	4.41	1.11	39	1.635*	.199
Ii	Writing	5.27	2.03	38	5.96	1.99	38	7.03	3.73	39	4.103*	.019
Iii	Reading	5.14	2.09	35	6.33	2.57	36	7.73	2.61	38	10.305*	.000
Iv	Listening	14.28	5.01	37	16.89	6.30	38	21.76	8.03	36	12.215*	.000

Table 1 shows the data about comparison of mean scores of grammar, writing, reading and listening skills score of control and experimental groups in progress test. The comparison of grammar skills scores are depicted through ANOVA that exhibits no significant difference (F=1.63, p>0.05) in grammar skills of control and experimental groups during the semester. The difference between different pairs in writing skills score exhibits significant difference (F=4.10, p<0.05) among three groups in writing skills on progress test. The difference in reading skills score among three groups shows significant difference (F=10.30, p<0.05) in reading mean scores of three groups: TM, CGT and CGTI. While the data about means of listening skills score indicates significant difference (F=12.21, p<0.05) among mean scores of three groups indicating significant difference in listening skills on progress test.

Table 2: **Post Hoc Test to Compare Language skills of control and experimental groups on Progress Test**

*p<0.05

	Skill	(I) group	(J) group	Mean (I-J)	p	(I) group	(J) group	Mean (I-J)	P	(I) group	(J) group	Mean (I-J)	p
I	Writing	TM	CGT	-0.684	0.55	CGT	TM	0.684	0.55	CGTI	TM	1.762*	0.02
			CGTI	-1.762*	0.02		CGTI	-1.078	0.22		CGT	1.077	0.22
II	Reading	TM	CGT	-1.190	0.12	CGT	TM	1.190	0.12	CGTI	TM	2.593*	0.00
			CGTI	-2.593*	0.00		CGTI	-1.403*	0.05		CGT	1.403*	0.05
III	Listening	TM	CGT	-2.610	0.23	CGT	TM	2.610	0.231	CGTI	TM	7.480*	0.00
			CGTI	-7.480*	0.00		CGTI	-4.869*	0.00		CGT	4.869*	0.00

Table 2 shows post-hoc test that further elaborates the results obtained from ANOVA. There is significant difference between groups taught by CGTI and TM in writing skills. However, there is no significant difference between groups taught by CGT and TM; CGT and CGTI. Then there is significant difference between groups taught by CGTI and TM;CGTI and CGT in reading skills. However, there is no significant difference between groups taught by CGT and TM. While the post-hoc test for listening skills depict the significant difference (p<0.05) between CGTI and TM, depicting improvement during the semester. Similarly there is significant difference (p<0.05) between two experimental groups CGT and CGTI. However, there is no significant difference between pairs TM and CGT in mean scores of listening test.

5.   Discussion
Formative assessments have a positive impact on students' learning (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2002; Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Formative assessment enhances students' learning and, consequently, students' achievement (Geisler-Brenstein & Schmeck, 1996). The first progress test was taken for measuring grammar skills from three groups after three weeks of treatment. The data analysis depicted no significant difference among three groups taught by TM, CGT and CGTI in grammar skills (as shown in Table 3.1). Hence, null hypothesis (Ho1) 'There is no significant difference among mean grammar score of students taught by TM, CGT and CGTI in formative assessment' was accepted for all three groups taught by TM, CGT and CGTI. Second progress test was taken to measure writing skills after six weeks of treatment. The data analysis of formative assessment revealed that the students taught by CGTI model outperform the students of TM ($p<0.05$) in writing skills but there was no significant difference between the groups taught by CGT and CGTI (as shown in Table 3.1). Therefore the null hypothesis (Ho2) 'There is no significant difference among mean writing score of students taught by TM, CGT and CGTI in progress test' was partially rejected. These results can be attributed to short time span for learning that students had from start of treatment till first two progress tests.

Third progress test was taken after nine weeks of interval for measuring reading skills.

Hypothesis 3 (Ho3): The result shows significant difference ($p<0.05$) between groups taught by TM, and CGTI; CGT and CGTI in reading skills (as shown in Table 3.1). Hence the null hypothesis 'There is no significant difference among mean reading score of students taught by TM, CGT and CGTI in progress test' was rejected for CGTI group and accepted for TM and CGT groups. The results are in favour of the study conducted by Foltz (2014) that depict improvement in students' language learning skills in formative assessment. Last progress test was taken after 12 weeks of treatment for measuring listening skills of three groups. The students taught through CGTI model outperform the students in TM group as well as students taught by CGT model in listening skills (as shown in Table 3.1). Therefore, the null hypothesis 'There is no significant difference among mean listening score of students taught by TM, CGT and CGTI in progress test' was rejected for CGTI group and accepted for TM and CGT groups. These results are in accordance with the study conducted by Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) that learners experience greater success in listening comprehension in formative assessment. The other studies have also indicated that considerable emphasis on formative assessment improves students' language learning skills (Shepard, 2005; Marzano & Haystead, 2008).

6.   Conclusions and Recommendations
The three methods of teaching English depict that Traditional method maintains its strength in grammar learning, while CGT model combining the qualities of grammar translation method and communicative approach enhanced writing and reading skills as compared to traditional method, while CGTI model with the additional benefit of ICTs enhanced all skills as compared to traditional method in formative assessment. CGTI model also enhanced reading and listening skills as compared to CGT model that clearly illustrated the importance of technology in second language learning for formative assessment. The CGTI model did not prove improvement in

grammar skills as compared to TM and CGT; similarly there is no significant difference between writing skills of the groups taught by CGT and CGTI model in formative assessment. It is recommended that these skills may be enhanced through increasing in time duration of tests in future experiments. This study did not include speaking skills in formative assessment; it is recommended that future studies may include speaking skills keeping in view the significance of formative assessment in English as a second language learning.

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