

The Current Practices of Teaching Grammar in CLT at Secondary School Level in Bangladesh: Problems and Probable Solutions

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Abstract—Experience of teaching English in Bangladesh demonstrates that grammar is the least interesting learning item in ESOL classes. In other words, students often feel uninterested and bored with lectures dealing with grammar. Consequently, learners of English remain quite weak in grammar; they cannot use appropriate structures of grammar neither in spoken nor in written English even though they have completed English language programs at various levels of educational institutions. Besides, huge number of students fails in different public exams for their lack of knowledge in English grammar. Besides, learners in Communicative Language Teaching or CLT chiefly aims at achieving communicative competence, and seem to bypass grammatical competence as noticed in the context of Bangladeshi learners. But, theoretically grammatical competence or the practice of grammar is not enemy of achieving communicative competence other than it facilitates the goal of CLT or communicative competence. This situation necessitates thinking over the matter in a different analytical way so that some dynamic and interesting ways of instructing grammar can be found out. The current papers makes an effort to investigate the performance of learners in mastering grammatical competence and the reasons of their failure in developing this linguistic skill of accuracy. The study also tries to find out some probable solutions to improve the current level of learners in grammar.

Index Terms—secondary level, CLT, grammar

I. INTRODUCTION:

To all Methodists, learning or mastering a language means a balance combination of both accuracy and fluency; linguistic as well as communicative competence. Pioneer of CLT don't differ with this view. What is different to their new method is the technique of teaching the rules of grammar, but they acknowledge the significance or role of grammar and emphasis on developing this skill. In spite of that, the practice of teaching and learning grammar in CLT in Bangladesh seems to be quite nominal or ignoble. Students' mind-numbing attitude towards grammar, failure of huge number of students in achieving the expected skill in grammar even after passing secondary and higher secondary levels are the vivid evidence of that bitter reality (Ahmed,2012). This lacking also proves that the application of the principles of CLT at secondary level in Bangladesh is not up to the mark. Because principles of CLT inevitably involve and acknowledge the role of grammar and if a teacher works according to those principles, students are supposed to be introduced, interested and skilled in grammatical competence. However, this study tries to conduct an evaluation of the practical practices of grammar particularly in teaching English at secondary level in Bangladesh by using CLT method.

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

To attain the research goals, this study basically uses secondary sources of data. The proposed study emphasizes on the analysis of the studies conducted on the practices of CLT at secondary schools located in Sylhet division particularly. With regards to its conceptual framework, the study views how teaching and learning of English are actually happening in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) classroom in Bangladesh. The secondary sources of data comprise the individual research findings, and publications, also conducted in wide area of CLT in Bangladesh as well as in global context.

A Brief Historical Background of ELT in Bangladesh

In Pakistan period English was taught and used as a second language in Bangladesh (previous East Pakistan). After Bangladesh got independence from Pakistan in 1971, English termed from second language to foreign language. In Pakistan period people were to use English for keeping officially record mainly, but after Bangladesh got independence there was no more mandatory official use of English. In recent time here restarted a huge growth of use of English in Bangladesh for communication e. g many national and international business organizations, educational institutions use English for all their internal as well as external communication and instruction. Either it is in work or education, English is a common means of, official and unofficial dealings. Here rises the need of changing strategy of ELT, because the purpose of using English has now been changed. Linguists found that the people who have already learned English to pass academic examination are not able to use English communicatively, but the first goal of learning English is now communication. Hence, this demand of situation or communicative need of English compelled the

educational authority of Bangladesh (e. g ministry of education, NCTB) change the strategy and methodology of ELT in Bangladesh. Thus, with the begging of new millennium Bangladesh launched new strategy or method in this arena by introducing CLT.

A sketch of ELT Institutions and methodologies

There are both public as well private institutions, involved in teaching English in Bangladesh from primary to higher level. Public institutions are more backdated particularly which are located in rural area. The students of those institutions study English aiming at passing the examination other than achieving linguistic competence. Whereas, private institutes are more advanced and updated in case of dynamism in teaching English. Their students have better perspectives in case of higher study and work in home as well as abroad. Nonetheless, along with these bodies of education there are also private coaching centers that have individual methods to English. These institutes also play remarkable roles in the field enhancing teaching and learning English.

Dimensions at the education system in Bangladesh

Basically the education system of Bangladesh is divided in to two dimensions i.e. general, and Madrasah. General education has three types; general education, technical-vocational education, and professional education. On the other hand, Madrasah education also has two dimensions i.e. alia madrasah and kawmi madrasah.

Different levels of education in Bangladesh

There are different levels in the educational structure of Bangladesh. To better understand the position of the students of secondary level who are the subject of this paper, it will be helpful to have a brief idea about those levels.

Primary

Primary schools of general dimension (ran by government) usually take the responsibility of teaching students, aged from six to eleven. The largest portion of learners of primary level is involved in this dimension. English is a mandatory discipline at this level. But students' performance in English is not up to the mark.

Secondary level

Secondary level of education in Bangladesh is also divided into different dimensions e. g school, alia madrasah, kawmi madrasah and so on. Kawmi madrasahs are totally apart from the knowledge and implantation of new methodologies of teaching English. These institutions still follow some grammar based teaching materials or books to teach English language. They teach English only for six to seven years from class I to VII or VIII. And, this is quite nominal as well. They authority of kawmi madrasahs are not conscious enough about the dynamism of teaching. Consequently the learners of kawmi madrasahs do not have any facility to practice CLT or learn English in modern and effective ways. Alia madrasahs' English curriculum share similarities with school's curriculum which is based on communicative language teaching method. But CLT is not effectively implemented here in alia madrasah too. The causes of failure are almost similar to school. It is therefore expected that the findings and recommendation of this study on school will also be similarly useful and implacable in case of madrasah why it does not necessitate carrying out a separate investigation or studying on alia madrasah. Nevertheless, school still arranges the education of majority of the students of the country. There are two types of school based on management e.g. public or government and private. Likewise, government primary schools, secondary government school are unable to ensure quality education particularly teaching English by arranging sufficient modern teaching equipment. Many of the schools do not adequate number of teacher. Sometimes a single teacher has to teach two to three hundred students at the same time in a class room. Consequently, it becomes quite impossible for the teacher to nurse all the students of the class. On the other hand private schools are performing a bit better in this case. Some schools divide their students in to sections of 20 to 50 students. However, the syllabus of English for both public and private school is same and based on the formula of CLT and centrally designed and placed by NCTB. All the schools either private or public must follow that syllabus.



A typical class room of Bangladeshi secondary school, where hundreds of students learn with a single teacher at a time.

Higher secondary

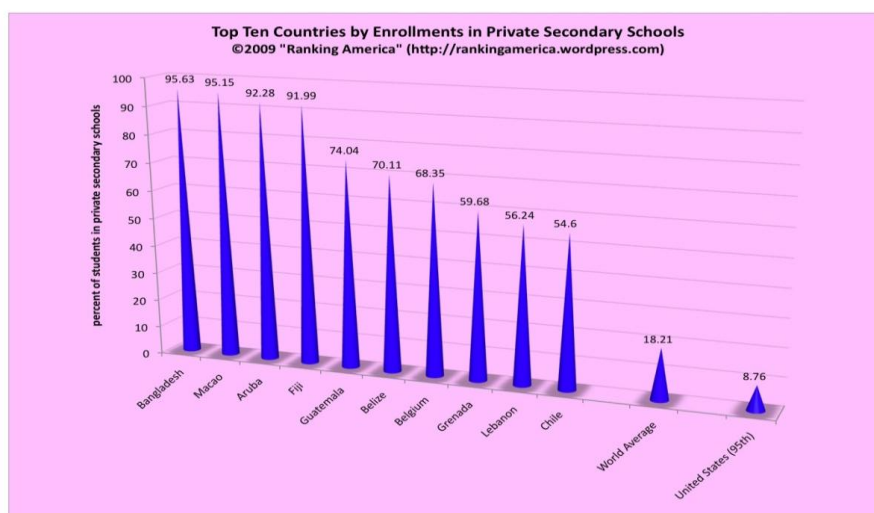
At this stage, both school and madrasah students are enrolled for two years of formal education after secondary level of five years. There are colleges as well as Alim madrasahs which are responsible to run higher secondary education. English is also here a mandatory and one of the most important disciplines which is a challenge for the students to pass this level or get entrance into higher level of education

Higher level

At higher level of education Bangladesh has universities and colleges. Universities are of two types private and public. Public universities follow both Bengali as well as English as the medium of instruction, but private universities use English as the only medium of instruction.

Public school vs. private school

It is already mentioned that in the case of every level of education in Bangladesh; primary, secondary, higher secondary, as well as higher level, there are two types of management private and public. Private schools are basically based on city. Here it is important to note that the performance of learners varies from public to private. Though the number of private schools is relatively very few but they are more conscious of dynamism than government institutions in terms of teaching and running their institutions. Though there are limitations in private schools in terms fees, and arrangement of qualified teachers paying sufficient salary, but these schools are rapidly growing and getting popularity. Whereas, government ran schools noticeably the primary schools of city are getting totally ignored particularly by the conscious parents. These schools are now mainly working for the children of labor and lower class society. Consequently, there is no remarkable step or plan to think about improvement of quality of these schools. The learners of these schools are ignoble as their parents in the society. On the other hand the elite have no concern to think over this matter as their children are privileged at highly paid private schools. However, the following diagram shows how private secondary schools are growing in Bangladesh.



Data from UNESCO
http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35396URL_DO=DO_TOPICURL_SECTION=201.html

Rural school vs. city school

There are also vivid differences between the city schools and village schools in terms of quality of teaching, management, teaching equipments and other facilities. Most common crisis of the schools located in rural area is the crisis of qualified teachers. So far the limited number of comparatively qualified teachers the country has, is not interested to stay in village, because of the scarcity of the financial and other personal benefits. It is true that the teachers are more neglected in terms of salary and other basic facility. This is one of the major problems of the whole education sector of Bangladesh. However, village are not only neglected from the nursing of qualified teachers but they are also deprived from the facilities of modern teaching materials and equipments like computer, access to internet, multimedia projectors etc. Many of village schools even do not have their elements like building, chair, table etc. One common reason of this crisis is the lack of awareness of the managerial committees of those schools, because majority of members of the managing committees of village schools are uneducated and therefore unable to arrange modern and sufficient facilities for their schools. Government also cannot pay any satisfactory extra concern for those neglected institutions. On the contrary, students of city are enjoying more these modern facilities than village students, why they are closer to success of learning particularly English with the help of up to date and dynamic teaching materials.

Introducing CLT at secondary level in Bangladesh

From British colonial period to the year of 2000, English had been learned and taught in Bangladesh by GTM. Turning from GTM to CLT was indeed a gradual process. There have been number recommendations from commissions and taskforces which from its background of dynamism or changes in policy and methods in teaching English. Finally, in 2001, it was decided to teach English at all levels of education in Bangladesh, directly by communicative language teaching method. Hence, secondary level also got its own curriculum based on the concept of communicative language teaching.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching or CLT began its journey with the slogan of emphasizing on the learners' communicative competence as opposed to linguistic competence. It claims to be something more than grammatical teaching. In other words, CLT is the method that is concerned with learners' needs of communication. Its teaching techniques reflect the choice of language content and materials, with emphasis on role play, pair and group work etc. The method suggests that the learners need to understand as well as express rather than merely describe the core of language by grammatical interpretations and vocabulary. But the role grammar is never ignored while putting emphasis on communicative function of language.

Role of Grammar in CLT

However, the principles of CLT in terms of grammar never tells to ignore grammar, but they suggest only different techniques or methods of practicing it; they turns from deductive to inductive way of teaching grammar-rules. Hence, there is no controversy regarding the significant role of grammar in CLT, it is therefore should be a core concern of research in the field of CLT for the apt implementation of the principles of CLT by analyzing the existing problems in terms of the practices of grammar in CLT class rooms and find out effective solutions.

Problems in the current Practices of teaching grammar

The current study based on some secondary data finds that a number of factors are responsible for making learners uninterested in practicing or learning grammar. Some the factors are analyzed below along with attempt to find out some probable solutions.

The nature of instruction: Mechanical other than interactional

As the students says teachers remain more busy in the CLT class as they were in the Grammar Translation Method or GTM classroom and the class is mainly teacher oriented; where students are silent listeners, hence students have rare option to live practice the grammar rules in the classroom through interaction with learning fellows (Ahmed, 2012). Consequently, they become silent audience and listen and memorize the rules of grammar on a whim as their teacher works mechanically in teaching these rules. Spontaneity is still far from the practical exercises of the learning environment.

Lack of learning management process

A study of Ahmed (Ahmed, 2012) finds that the teachers of CLT in Bangladesh have a nodding knowledge regarding nature and management of CLT class room. As a result they fail to attract the students the learning materials effectively. Students don't find any diversity or differences of CLT and GTM class room.

Presentation of Grammar Items, and Text book

To some analysts, the physical appearance of English book is a factor to learners of secondary level. It vastly influences the psyche of young school learners. But, the current secondary English text books are printed on 'news paper' of below standard which can't attract the mind of learners. Apparently, therefore, newly introduced CLT based text book does not differ from the old GTM based text book. Consequently it becomes a psychological barrier to the students though it seems to be minor one.

Lack of Variation in Teaching

Communicative language teaching also put emphasis on teaching grammar as it is emphasized in Grammar Translation Method, but the technique of teaching grammar in CLT vividly varies from GTM. But this variation is seldom followed in real teaching situation. Consequently students may feel bored and burden in the discussion of grammar as they felt early in GTM class room.

Absence of relation of grammar with realia

The practices of grammar is likely to be interesting and useful when students are shown its relation with the practical life and that's why there must be a link or close connection of the practices of grammar based language with language activities outside the class room. But it noticed that many of students did not even hear the word realia.

Learners' Self Experience

As the learners of CLT classroom are still treated as the learners of GTM, hence they have few opportunity to demonstrate and enhance their own experience of their practices of language from which they could realize their lacking of grammatical competence, and follow the principle 'learning through teaching'. Example Activities, role play, interviews, games, language, exchanges, surveys, pair work, and learning by teaching etc. learning activities are rarely offered to the learners.

Orientation of learning

In the current practices, the instruction of grammar is chiefly exam oriented other than not notional-functional. Students memorize grammatical rules the more they need to pass the exam. Teachers don't or can't demonstrate the utility of grammar in language of real context or notion.

Standard of interpretation

Standard of explanation and age of learners don't always match with each other. Because of the lack of this harmony and variation, learners seem to lose their interest in the instruction of grammar.

Motivation

Teacher is considered to be the centre of learning (Ara, 2004). Usually teachers influence the psyche of learners, and help them in any way that motivates them to work with the language. They could be motivated if the practical role of grammar in their practical, academic and professional future is explained to them. But the unfortunate reality shows the lack of this practice in Bangladeshi schools. Students' uninteresting and negative attitude towards grammar is the vivid evidence of this fact (Ahmed, 2012).

Journey from Fluency to Accuracy

CLT principles suggest a gradual development of language from fluency to accuracy. Though its primary goal is fluency but progressively accuracy is also expected. This natural and principle-based attempt and exercise is not maintained.

Freedom and Fear

Where students are allowed to enjoy plenty of freedom with ample linguistic exercises in CLT like telling relevant personal story using face, body and voice, but in Bangladeshi schools learners are still dominated and frequently criticized, and corrected for their grammatical mistakes as well as errors, instead of having those opportunities of practicing language independently (Wingate, 2003). Consequently they feel afraid and avoid exercise of grammar-items.

III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

However, there may be number of ways to overcome the found or above mentioned problems and make the practice of grammar more interesting to school learners. This paper has tried to give the teachers and further researchers some ideas about many of the probable ways of finding out some practical solutions. It attempts to reveal some suggestions along with a sample of proposed practical grammar lesson for CLT classes. In order to prepare some sample lessons in new and diversified ways, author has tried to follow the principles of Communicative Language Teaching method other than conventional principles and practices of Grammar Translation Method. Some techniques of teaching technical disciplines have also been reviewed in this study. This approach may be one of many probable ways in the case. This effort would be successful if it can make learners a bit more interested in learning grammar, helps English teachers of anywhere of the world and opens new doors for linguists to find out more effective and interesting techniques to teach English grammar successfully. A paradigm of preparing grammar lesson in CLT can be author's recent book on teaching grammar; "How to Prepare Grammar Lesson". A sample of his suggested ways of preparing grammar lesson is provided below. (Ahmed, 2012)

Lesson Layout

Lesson layout introduces the sample activities which are commonly followed by every lesson of this book.

Teacher:		Date:	
Subject:		Duration:	
Topic :		Time:	
Context:			
Learning Objectives:			
Activities:			
Resources:			
Contribution to Core Skills:			
Differentiation:			
Notes on Class:			
Homework:			
Confidential Pupil Information:			

Outcome of today's lecture: Items students can do/cannot do after listening to lecture.

Learned Items	Can do	Cannot do
1.		
2.		

Practical Lesson -1

Course:	Remedial English	Date:	
Topic :	Review of tenses (present simple, continuous, perfect ,present perfect continuous)	Duration:	
Context:	Self-assessment and practices	Time:	
Learning Objectives:	The pupils themselves will evaluate their knowledge of the topic, basically to have their background knowledge on the topic and identify their lacking which to be emphasized in instruction particularly. They will begin to convert active sentences in to passive.		
Activities:	Starting and engaging by asking personal question on the topic, quiz etc. producing a 'rough' version of a tense sheet. Identification from realia, Native speakers' uses. Converting the given word in to different tenses and complete sentences. Memorize the formula of learning tense, voice and natural sentences. Three sentences are to be memorized or frequently repeated. If time remains the learners will practice in group and pairs and many more.		
Resources:	Completed paper based solution. Note book, referred books of grammar, Lecture sheet by the instructor, CD/VCD		
Contribution to Core Skills:	Ability to produce twelve basic sentences. Ensure the right uses of tense both in spoken and written English. Theoretical and practical knowledge.		
Differentiation:	Differentiation based on outcome. More capable pupils will be able to produce accurate 2304 basic expressions with differentiation of person. Pupils who normally struggle with making appropriate 288 fundamental sentences.		
Notes on Class:			
Homework:	The pupils will memorize twelve basic sentences along with ten most common words as they know in Bengali.		
Confidential Pupil Information:			

Outcome of today's lecture: Items students can do/cannot do after listening to lecture.

Learned Items	Can do	Cannot do
1.Convert same in to different tenses with different sentences		
2.Convert active sentences of present tenses in to passive		
3. Making natural sentences of four present tenses.		

Evaluation Sheet (evaluation and review of the class by the students)

Formal comment	Topic:	Date:
Is the topic easily understood?		
How do you feel it easy?		
Was it difficult? Why?		
How do you think it could be understood more easily? Your formal suggestion		

How the proposed lesson benefits

This sample lesson plan is the outcome of some practical lessons which have been applied in teaching English as a second language at a Bangladeshi university. The lesson basically deals with the rules and regulations of English grammar. The application of this new method of arranging grammar classes have been tested to be more fruitful than traditional procedure and practices .It is therefore expected that these classes can function as some models of preparing grammar classes particularly for non-native learners of English of any other country. This can be a guide to prepare further English grammar classes following the given items and adding some other aspects from your creative brain. This type of lecture sheet can also act as a diary of both teacher and students to keep the record of teaching and learning progress which will later help changing and updating the strategies.

Use of the Evaluation Sheet

We have already mentioned the importance and use of asking learners to give their opinion regarding teaching activities of their class and this sheet is indeed designed for this purpose. This opinion may be public or confidential; because some students are frankly and do not feel hesitated to share their opinion, but there are also learners who are a bit introvert and feel ashamed to express their opinion even though they face problem and have something to say. If learners are not interested to use the sheet publicly in the class, they can be given private and confidential options to use it.

Remember teachers' main concern is here to know their opinion by any means

IV. FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

For making the grammar teaching effective and interesting teacher teachers can keep the following suggestions in their mind along with the above given model of preparing lectures.

1. Please try to penetrate in to the terms or lesson items.
2. Ensure what goal or skill each and every item suggests to achieve.

3. Be always specific of your item, along with going to irrelevant supplementary.
 4. Look at your time table; allocate certain amount of time for each item and ensure the apt utilization of the certain time for certain topic.
 5. Think what new item you can add.
 6. Get the feedback after every lecture. You have model as well as blank options in the sample class sheet.
 7. Try to track the opinion of learners regarding the presentation of learning items; what learners say and how they feel enjoyable is your method.
 8. Depending on your teaching situation, syllabus, psyche of students etc. you can modify the model.
 9. Remember the proposed lecture plan is based on the principle “teaching and learning are the dynamic affairs” that is why these are always modifiable.
- Oh! Do not forget to review the class by student’s evaluation sheet.

V. CONCLUSION

A developing country like Bangladesh has lot of potentials of CLT. Its enormous social implication must demonstrate the inevitable role and influence of CLT on the socio-economic development of the country. If its prolific role is taken into notice and apposite actions are taken for its development, it must contribute a lot for the development of numerous human resources existing in Bangladesh. For several other realistic relevant reasons the country should emphasize and lay proper stress on the development of teaching grammar in CLT. However, the secondary level of education is regarded as the preparatory stage of learners to enter in to the higher educational stages. CLT, therefore, in this stage plays quite vital role. But, unfortunately the performance of CLT particularly in terms of teaching grammar at this level is not up to the mark. Consequently, the learners cannot fulfill the expected requirements of higher level of education, and have to face lot of difficulties at followings stages of their educational as well as professional life. Thus, finally, it is expected that if the described suggestions are taken in to notice by the concerned individuals and authorities of ELT in Bangladesh, teaching and learning of grammar in CLT will be much more effective and fruitful particularly at secondary level. Lastly it is also opined that the above mentioned opinions are many of probable ones. If researchers come forward to spend their precious time in this arena of research, many other effective solutions will be found.

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