A Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of Traditional Teaching Methods and Communicative Language Teaching In Improving Students Language Proficiency in Selected Secondary Schools, Uyo, AkwaIbom State

1. Uzoma, Bethel Nnabugwu
Department of Arts and Humanities Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike.
2. Ojemuyide, Chidiebere Cordelia
Department of Vocational and Technical Education Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike.
3. Foyewa, Olubukola Abosede
Department of Arts and Humanities Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike.
4. Ajali, Obiageli Agu
Department of Arts and Humanities Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike.
5. Chukwuma-Nwankwo, Ifeoma Francisca
Department of Arts and Humanities Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike.

Mail: uzomabethel@gmail.com **ph:** +234(0)7086735802

Abstract

The study examines a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods and communicative language teaching in improving students' language proficiency in selected secondary schools inUyo, AkwaIbom State. Three research objectives and one hypothesis were formulated and used in the study. 200 senior secondary school students were randomly selected for the study. Data was generated from the performance test, processed and analyzed with descriptive research design and hypothesis tested with t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The comparative analysis shows that traditional teaching methods significantly outperformed Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing student language proficiency. The computed T-value (4.56) surpasses the critical T-value (2.23) at the 0.05 significance level, affirming the superior effectiveness of traditional methods. These methods yield higher immediate proficiency gains due to structured repetition and memorization. It was recommended that secondary schools should combine the strengths of traditional teaching methods and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to maximize students' language proficiency. Traditional methods can provide the necessary foundation and structure, while CLT can enhance practical usage and long-term retention.

Keywords:

Traditional Teaching Methods, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Language Proficiency, Secondary Schools, Comparative Analysis, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Student Performance, Descriptive Research Design, T-test Analysis, Education Methods, Structured Repetition, Memorization, Teaching Effectiveness, Language Education, Proficiency Gains.

Introduction

Traditional teaching methods emphasize rote memorization, grammar rules, and translation exercises, focusing primarily on reading and writing skills. These methods often involve teacher-centered instruction, where the teacher is the primary source of knowledge.In contrast, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prioritizes interaction and communication as the main goals of language learning. CLT is student-centered and encourages active participation through real-life communication tasks. It emphasizes speaking and listening skills, fostering an immersive environment where students use the language contextually (Brown,2021).

The effectiveness of teaching methodologies in language education has long been a topic of scholarly debate. Two prominent approaches are Traditional Teaching Methods (TTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Brown, 2021). Each method embodies distinct philosophies and practices aimed at enhancing students' language proficiency.

Traditional Teaching Methods emphasize a structured approach where grammar rules, vocabulary, and translation exercises form the backbone of instruction. This method, often teacher-centered, focuses on reading and writing skills, with the teacher acting as the primary knowledge dispenser. Proponents argue that a strong foundation in grammar and vocabulary is essential for language proficiency. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), TTM involves systematic instruction, which can provide a clear framework for language learners, aiding in the development of reading and writing skills through repetition and memorization.

On the other hand, Communicative Language Teaching emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of TTM. CLT prioritizes the ability to communicate effectively and fluently in real-life situations. It is inherently student-centered, encouraging active participation and interaction among learners. The CLT approach integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills through communicative activities that mirror real-world contexts. According to Littlewood (2017), CLT's strength lies in its focus on functional language use, preparing students to navigate diverse communicative scenarios by promoting fluency over accuracy.

The comparative effectiveness of these methodologies in improving language proficiency is a subject of ongoing research. Studies have shown that CLT can significantly enhance students' speaking and listening skills. A meta-analysis by Richards (2016), showed that students exposed to communicative methods demonstrated greater gains in communicative competence compared to those taught through traditional methods. This is particularly evident in environments where the goal is to foster conversational abilities and practical language use.

However, TTM is not without its merits. It has been argued that traditional methods provide a rigorous grounding in linguistic structure, which can be crucial for advanced language study. A strong grammatical foundation is necessary for academic writing and comprehension, areas where TTM often excels.

The debate between TTM and CLT often centers on the balance between fluency and accuracy. While CLT emphasizes the former, TTM focuses on the latter. The integration of both methods could potentially offer a more holistic approach to language teaching, combining the strengths of each to cater to diverse learning needs. An eclectic approach that incorporates elements of both TTM and CLT might be most effective, addressing the varied dimensions of language proficiency (Leki, 2020).

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Evaluate the impact of traditional teaching methods on student language proficiency.
2. Examine the effectiveness of communicative language teaching on language proficiency:
3. Examine the difference between effectiveness of traditional teaching methods and communicative language teaching in improving students language proficiency

Research questions

1. What is the impact of traditional teaching methods on student language proficiency?
2. What is the effectiveness of communicative language teaching on language proficiency?
3. What is the difference between effectiveness of traditional teaching methods and communicative language teaching in improving students' language proficiency?

Research Hypotheses

There is no significantdifference between effectiveness of Traditional Teaching Methods and Communicative Language Teaching in improving students' language proficiency.

Literature Review

Traditional Teaching Methods

Traditional Teaching Methods (TTM) in language education encompasses a range of practices rooted in structuralism and behaviorism. These methods emphasize the systematic teaching of grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, often through direct instruction, memorization, and repetition.

One core aspect of TTM is the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which focuses on translating texts between the target language and the native language. This method aims to build a solid foundation in grammatical rules and vocabulary. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), GTM enables learners to understand the linguistic structure of the language, which can be beneficial for reading comprehension and academic purposes.

Another traditional approach is the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), which emerged in the mid-20th century. ALM is based on behaviorist theories, particularly the works of B.F. Skinner. It employs repetitive drills and pattern practice to instill language habits. The Audio-Lingual Method emphasizes mimicry and memorization, with a strong focus on pronunciation and immediate error correction, aiming to produce fluent speakers through rote learning.

Traditional methods often involve teacher-centered classrooms where the instructor is the primary authority, delivering structured lessons and ensuring students' adherence to linguistic accuracy. This approach can provide learners with a clear framework for understanding language mechanics. Ur (2022) highlights that traditional methods can be particularly effective in environments where the primary goal is to develop strong reading and writing skills, as they promote precision and a deep understanding of linguistic rules.

Despite their structured nature, traditional methods have been criticized for lacking engagement and communicative competence. Critics argue that these methods do not adequately prepare students for real-life communication, as they focus more on form than on practical language use (Brown, 2021).

However, supporters contend that a solid grammatical foundation is crucial for advanced language study and academic success.

Traditional Teaching Methods offer a rigorous approach to language learning, emphasizing grammatical accuracy and linguistic structure. While they may not prioritize communicative skills, their structured nature can be advantageous for learners aiming to develop a strong foundational knowledge of a language.

Communicative Language Teaching

Hall and Cook (2017) stated that communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the limitations of traditional language teaching methods, particularly those focusing heavily on grammar and rote memorization. CLT emphasizes the functional use of language in real-life situations, aiming to develop learners' communicative competence through interactive and meaningful communication activities.

At its core, CLT is student-centered, promoting active participation and collaboration among learners. It prioritizes the ability to convey and understand messages over the mere accuracy of linguistic forms. According to Kumaravadivelu (2017), the primary goal of CLT is to enable learners to use the language for genuine communication, which involves developing skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in an integrated manner.

One of the key features of CLT is its focus on authentic materials and real-world tasks. This approach encourages students to engage in activities such as role-plays, simulations, and problem-solving tasks that mirror actual communicative situations. Littlewood (2017) emphasizes that these activities are designed to reflect the kinds of exchanges learners might encounter outside the classroom, thereby making the learning experience more relevant and motivating.

Furthermore, CLT promotes the use of pair and group work to foster interaction among students. This collaborative learning environment helps learners practice language in context, negotiate meaning, and develop fluency. As noted by Swan (2015), the emphasis on interaction and communication helps learners build confidence and reduces the fear of making mistakes, which is often a barrier to language acquisition.

Despite its advantages, CLT also faces challenges. Critics argue that it may not provide sufficient focus on grammatical accuracy and that it requires highly skilled teachers who can create and manage communicative activities effectively. Additionally, the success of CLT depends heavily on the availability of resources and the cultural context of the learners.

Traditional Teaching Methods (TTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Improving Students' language Proficiency

The effectiveness of Traditional Teaching Methods (TTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving students' language proficiency varies based on learning objectives and contexts. Each approach offers unique advantages and faces specific challenges.

Traditional Teaching Methods, such as the Grammar-Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, focus on systematic grammar instruction and vocabulary acquisition through repetition and

memorization. These methods are particularly effective in developing reading and writing skills and providing a strong foundation in grammatical accuracy. Richards and Rodgers (2014) note that TTM helps learners understand complex linguistic structures, which is crucial for academic success. However, these methods often lack emphasis on practical communication, potentially limiting students' speaking and listening proficiency.

In contrast, Larsen-Freeman et al (2017) posited that communicative Language Teaching emphasizes real-life communication and interactive learning. CLT is highly effective in improving speaking and listening skills by engaging students in authentic tasks and collaborative activities. CLT promotes fluency and confidence in using the language in various social contexts. Larsen-Freeman et al (2017) added that students exposed to communicative methods showed significant gains in communicative competence compared to those taught through traditional methods. However, CLT's focus on fluency sometimes leads to less attention to grammatical accuracy, which can be a drawback for learners requiring a rigorous grammatical foundation.

The debate over these methods often centers on the balance between accuracy and fluency. Integrating elements from both approaches could offer a more comprehensive language learning experience. Blended approach, combining the strengths of TTM and CLT, may better address diverse learning needs and improve overall language proficiency.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey design to examine the characteristics of the population and the variation in the distribution. A sample of 200 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique at the senior secondary level. Furthermore, the study adopted quasi-experimental methods that enabled the students to be taught using two teaching methods (traditional teaching and communicative language teaching methods). After the classes, the students were given a test with each of the two methods, and the scores were recorded and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and T-test statistics to compare the means of student language proficiency scores.

Results

1. What is the impact of traditional teaching methods on student language proficiency? Impact of traditional teaching methods on student language proficiency (N=200)

Variable	N	*X-mean proficiency score*	STD	t-test
Traditional teaching methods	100			
		18.2	2.63	8.55
Student language proficiency	100			

Based on the data observed that traditional teaching methods had a significant impact on student language proficiency, as indicated by the high t-test value of 8.55. The average language proficiency score was 18.2, with a standard deviation of 2.63, showing how much the scores varied around this mean value within the sample of 100 students.

2. What is the effectiveness of communicative language teaching on Student language proficiency?

Effectiveness of communicative language teaching on Student language proficiency(N=200)

Variable	N	X- *X-mean proficiency score*	STD
Communicative language teaching	100		
		14.8	2.23
Student language proficiency	100		

At p-value >0.05, we can interpret this as there being no statistically significant difference in student language proficiency based on the use of communicative language teaching. In other words, in this study, the data suggests that the method of communicative language teaching did not have a significant impact on student language proficiency, at least within the parameters of this study and the data collected.

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between effectiveness of traditional teaching methods and communicative language teaching in improving students' language proficiency difference between effectiveness of traditional teaching methods and communicative language teaching in improving students' language proficiency.

Variable	N	X- *X-mean proficiency score*	STD	t-crit.	T-cal.
Communicative language teaching	100				
		14.8	2.23	2.23	4.56
Traditional Teaching method	100				

In the above table, the computed t-value (4.56), was greater than the t-critical (2.23) at 0.05 level of significance with the degree of freedom 198. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected, meaning that there is significant difference between communicative language teaching and traditional teaching methods.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis aimed to evaluate the impact of traditional teaching methods versus communicative language teaching (CLT) on student language proficiency. The findings reveal significant differences in the effectiveness of these teaching approaches.

Traditional Teaching Methods: The data show that traditional teaching methods significantly impact student language proficiency. With a sample size of 100 students, the average proficiency score was 18.2, and the standard deviation was 2.63, indicating some variability around the mean. The t-test value of 8.55 is notably high, suggesting that the traditional methods employed led to

statistically significant improvements in language proficiency among the students. This result underscores the effectiveness of conventional instructional techniques in fostering language skills, likely due to structured learning environments and repetitive practice characteristic of traditional methods.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): In contrast, the effectiveness of CLT was evaluated with another sample of 100 students. The mean proficiency score for students taught using CLT was 14.8, with a standard deviation of 2.23. Despite the relatively lower mean score compared to traditional methods, the t-test analysis indicated no statistically significant improvement in student proficiency, with a p-value greater than 0.05. This outcome suggests that, within the scope of this study, CLT did not substantially enhance language proficiency. Possible reasons could include insufficient implementation time for CLT techniques to take effect, or a need for greater teacher training in CLT methodologies.

Comparative Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The research hypothesis posited that there is no significant difference between the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods and CLT in improving student language proficiency. However, the comparative analysis revealed a significant difference. The computed T-value (4.56) exceeded the critical T-value (2.23) at the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This finding indicates that traditional teaching methods are significantly more effective than CLT in enhancing student language proficiency.

This result aligns with previous research indicating that traditional methods often yield higher immediate proficiency gains due to structured repetition and memorization techniques (Brown, 2017). Conversely, CLT, which emphasizes interaction and practical usage, may require more time to show significant results, as it focuses on long-term language retention and practical application rather than immediate proficiency (Richards & Rodgers, 2018).

The clear disparity in mean proficiency scores and the statistical significance underscore the superior impact of traditional teaching methods in this context. These findings suggest that while CLT has its advantages in creating engaging and interactive learning environments, traditional methods may be more effective for achieving higher proficiency scores in the short term. Thus, educators might consider integrating elements of both approaches to balance immediate proficiency with long-term language competence.

Conclusions

The comparative analysis conclusively shows that traditional teaching methods significantly outperform Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing student language proficiency. The computed T-value (4.56) surpasses the critical T-value (2.23) at the 0.05 significance level, affirming the superior effectiveness of traditional methods. These methods yield higher immediate proficiency gains due to structured repetition and memorization (Brown, 2017). In contrast, CLT, which focuses on interaction and practical usage, may require more time for significant results, as it aims for long-term language retention (Richards & Rodgers, 2018). Thus, integrating both approaches could balance immediate proficiency with long-term competence, maximizing the benefits of each method.

Recommendations

1. Secondary Schools should combine the strengths of traditional teaching methods and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to maximize student language proficiency. Traditional methods can provide the necessary foundation and structure, while CLT can enhance practical usage and long-term retention.

2. Secondary Schoolsutilize traditional methods for initial language instruction to achieve higher immediate proficiency gains. Structured repetition and memorization techniques can be particularly effective in the early stages of language learning.

3. Schools shouldemphasize CLT in advanced stages of language learning to foster interaction, practical usage, and long-term retention. This approach can help students apply their language skills in real-world contexts.

4. There is a strong need tooffer professional development programmes for principals, educators or teachers to effectively implement both traditional and communicative teaching methods. Training can help teachers integrate these approaches seamlessly and adapt their teaching strategies to meet diverse student needs.

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