

HIGHLIGHTING THE BEST ENGLISH TEACHING METHOD FOR KATSINA STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS: COMMUNICATIVE VERSUS TRADITIONAL

¹Ibrahim Sani, ^{1*}Abdulahakim Saidu

¹Department of English and French, Humanities, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author Email: saiduabdulahakim@gmail.com

Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: March 2024 Revised: June 2024 Published: October 2024	<i>This study was undertaken to highlight the best English teaching method in Katsina state secondary schools by comparing communicative method (CLT) against traditional method (GTM) to ascertain the best approach for teaching Grammar, vocabulary, written composition, oral composition, and oral English. The study population comprised all 2023/2024 SS2 students of public secondary schools in Katsina State. It deploys experimental design which involved gathering quantitative data from the students' post-tests to assess their mastery of these language skills. In order to analyze the collected data, the researchers utilized the SPSS (IBM Statistical Processor Version 25) for precise and efficient processing, generating various necessary outputs to draw meaningful conclusions. Based on the findings, with the exception of teaching grammar which revealed no significant difference as the p-value was .003 which is below .05, CLT proved to be more impactful compared to traditional method in teaching the other four subjects. To this end, the researchers recommend the full implementation of CLT method at Senior Secondary Schools in Katsina State. Similarly, it is suggested that CLT and GTM should be blended in teaching grammar in order to help students to learn the grammatical structures of English and use them in a meaningful and engaging way.</i>
Keywords Communicative teaching; Grammar Translation; Linguistic Competence; Communicative Competence; Multicultural; Multilingual;	
How to cite: Sani, I., & Saidu, A. (2024). Highlighting the Best English Teaching Method for Katsina State Secondary Schools: Communicative Versus Traditional. <i>JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching</i> , 12(4), 2123-2133. DOI: https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v12i4.11055	

INTRODUCTION

The traditional method of teaching English popularly known as Grammar Translated Method (GTM) dominated the landscape of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nigerian secondary schools including those in Katsina state for decades. This method, characterized by its emphasis on grammar rules rote memorization and isolated vocabulary drills, has proven increasingly ineffective in equipping students with the essential communication skills for real-world English use. One of the key shortcomings of traditional method lies on its decontextualization nature. Students often spend countless hours memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary lists with little connection to actual spoken language (Long, 2016). This focus on isolated elements creates a disconnection between learning and application, leaving the students unprepared to effectively use English in real-world situations. Imagine a student who can make perfect conjugation verbs in the past tense but struggles to have a simple conversation about what they do every day.

Consequently, the emphasis on rote memorization in the traditional method leads to students' frustration and disengagement as they are expected to passively absorb information through repetitive drills often without a meaningful understanding of the language. This approach fails to address individual learning styles and can quickly lead to demotivation inhibiting students' progress (Yuko & Yuichiro, 2017). Another limitation of the traditional

method is its neglect of fluency development and constant focus on accuracy, and emphasis on perfect grammar, which often creates a hesitancy (apprehension) to speak and an overreliance on memorization. This hinders fluency development, leaving students afraid to make mistakes and unable to communicate spontaneously; this leads to a major language impediment which is speaking anxiety.

In some of the senior secondary schools' classrooms students may already possess strong communication skills in their native languages, however, the traditional method fails to nurture the confidence and fluidity needed for effective English communication (Ellis, 2018). This even becomes more apparent when considering the sociolinguistic context of Katsina State where English is not the dominant language in day-to-day communication; thereby limiting real-world practice opportunities. Thus, the traditional method, for its lack of emphasis on real-world application, fails to equip students with the skills necessary to bridge this gap (Yusuf et al., 2021).

It is quite fortunate that alternative approaches exist to address this unfavourable situation. The communicative language teaching (CLT) method offers a more dynamic and engaging approach. CLT prioritizes real-world communication, utilizing tasks, discussions, and role-playing activities that encourage students to use English meaningfully. This approach fosters more exposure to the language use, fluency development and allows students to practise the language in a contextually relevant way, mimicking real-world communication scenarios (Yuko & Yuichiro, 2017). Thus, the main aim of this study is to highlight the best English teaching method in Katsina state secondary schools by comparing communicative method (CLT) against traditional method (GTM) to ascertain the best approach for teaching Grammar, vocabulary, written composition, oral composition, and oral English. Therefore, it sets to answer the research question, ' what is the best method of teaching English in senior secondary schools in Katsina state? To the best knowledge of the reserachers, there is lack of existing research focusing on English Language teaching methods in secondary schools in Katsina State. Thus, conducting this study may not only expose to the government, teachers and reserachers the most appropriate teaching method to be adopted by English Language teachers at secondary school level but also guide curricullum development and textbook design.

By its nature, CLT is a student-centered approach. Unlike traditional methods, which often relegate students to passive roles, CLT fosters active participation through tasks, discussions, and role-playing activities (Littlewood, 2014). This, therefore, caters well for multilingual classrooms by allowing students to leverage their existing linguistic resources. Students can collaborate and communicate using their home languages while simultaneously practising English, creating a more inclusive and interactive learning environment (Breen, 2018). Recent research by Wang & Liu (2023) further emphasizes this point, highlighting the positive impact of CLT on fostering a sense of community and collaboration in multilingual classrooms. This recent study by Wang & Liu (2023) makes a pivotal contribution to the understanding of this current topic under study.

In addition, CLT promotes the development of essential communication skills that transcend language barriers. Traditional methods often prioritize memorization of grammatical rules, neglecting the practical application of language. CLT, however, emphasizes real-world communication, encouraging students to focus on meaning and fluency over perfect grammar (Ellis, 2018). This is particularly beneficial in multilingual classrooms, where students may possess varying levels of grammatical proficiency. A study conducted by Faraji et al. (2021) demonstrates that CLT tasks that encourage negotiation of meaning are particularly effective in promoting communication skills in multilingual settings.

Another advantage of CLT in this context is its focus on developing pragmatic competence. Traditional methods often neglect the importance of sociolinguistic awareness – understanding how language is used appropriately in different contexts. In contrast, CLT

activities often involve role-playing scenarios that require students to use English appropriately depending on the situation in which they find themselves (Littlewood, 2014). This is crucial in multilingual classrooms, as students may already possess strong communication skills in their home languages but lack the understanding of how to use English effectively in various social settings. In another study, Sercu et al. (2020) highlights the effectiveness of CLT in fostering pragmatic competence by emphasizing the importance of context and audience in communication.

Therefore, it is with the above views in mind that the current study was embarked upon to apply CLT approach in selected senior secondary schools in Katsina state to examine whether the method would improve the students' mastery in Grammar, vocabulary, written composition, oral composition, and oral English. This will not only reveal the most effective method of teaching English in secondary school in Katsina and Nigeria at large, but also add to the existing literature on this topic thereby providing additional insight around: developing intercultural competence Wu, (2018) and Hwang (2017), promoting multilingualism, Wei (2016), building confidence and fluency, Lyster (2019) and Salmani (2015) and fostering collaboration and inclusion, Xiao and Liu (2019).

Research Hypothesis

The research tested the following null hypotheses at 0.05 level significance:

H0₁ There is no significant difference in the impact of CLTM on grammatical competence among L2 learners in experimental group and control group.

H0₂ There is no significant difference in the impact of CLTM on communicative competence among L2 learners in experimental group and control group.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research methodology is a structured and scientific method for the collection, analysing and interpretation of quantitative or qualitative data to address research questions, test hypotheses or both McCombes & George (2023). It encompasses the design of the study, selection of appropriate research instruments, and ensuring the reliability and validity of findings, Davidavičienė, (2018) . Research methodology has three main types: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method, each is chosen based on research the objectives. Researchers must carefully consider ethical factors and limitations before selecting their methodology, Bouchrika, (2024). Therefore, this research is quantitative as it uses numerical data, Cresswell (2014).

Reserach Design

Quasi-experimental design was considered the most suitable design. This is because, Quasi-experimental design is a research method that aims to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable, Bouchrika, (2024). Thus, the subjects of this study were categorised into Control group (taught using GTM) and experimental group (taught using CLT) involving post-test. It was specifically carried out in classroom settings where the students were selected purposely and grouped into two and then assigned to their groups. The two groups share all relevant aspects except exposure to the experimental variables. The population of the study comprised all 2023/2024 SS2 (senior secondary) students of public secondary school in Katsina State. However, the researchers classified the state into three strata: Katsina Central, Katsina North and Katsina South. Then they identified all the public secondary schools in Katsina. Using purposive sampling technique, two schools were selected from each stratum. Moreover, intact class was used incorporating both genders and students from different ethno-linguistic background.

Research Instruments

Oral and written tests were used as research instruments for data collection so as to have reliable achievement tests for analysis. The test items were validated by a professor of Applied Linguistics. Reliability on the other hand, was determined by using split half reliability to obtain the (r-value). To collect data, the researchers and their assistants went round the selected schools and taught the five topics to the two groups: Experimental and control, the former group was taught with communicative language teaching method and the latter with grammar translation method for five weeks. To ensure equal treatments, all the lesson plans for both experimental and control groups were prepared and delivered by the researchers and their assistants. Post-test was then administered to all the groups. Control of extraneous variables to ensure qualitative data; the experimental school (group) were selected differently to control school. This would not allow the students to communicate or realize what is going on as it may affect the quality of the data. The corpus was then graded and analysed through descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and inferential statistics of t-test. Mean and standard deviation was used to compare the students' performance. H01 and H02 were realised through independent t-test. IBM SPSS statistic processor version 25 was deployed for the analysis.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This unit presents logical analysis of research data analysed using the specified design as follows:

The Role of Communicative and Traditional Methods on Teaching Grammar

Table 1

T-test Statistics on Differences Between Communicative and Traditional Teaching Methods on Teaching Grammar

Communicative	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Traditional	1.00	102	63.7353	16.11034	159	.082	.423	Not sig.
Communicative	2.00	118	62.0763	14.56794	117			

Note that table 1 above displays the analysis of the difference between communicative and traditional method of teaching grammar. The mean calculated by experimental (CLT) and control group (GTM) are 63.7353 and 62.0763 and the standard deviation of 16.11034 and 14.56794, and the degree of freedom of 218. The P-Value obtained was .423 which was greater than the level of significance of 0.05. This shows that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of CTM over GTM. Hence, the hypothesis which earlier stated that there is no significant difference in the performance of L2 Learner exposed to CTM in achieving grammatical competence is retained. This is because the difference in the performance of students in CLT class and that of GTM is not significant. Thus, both methods are effective as far as teaching grammar and achieving grammatical competence is concerned.

Although the fact that there is no significant difference between communicative and traditional methods in teaching grammar is still contentious among scholars, the current study, as shown in the statistics in Table 1, indicates that, in terms of grammar teaching, the two methods are both effective, especially in multilingual and multicultural classrooms and at senior secondary school level. Thus, this finding is contrary to some past studies which posited that students exposed to grammar through traditional method find it difficult to develop communicative competence which they very much need to express themselves in real-world situations (Fotos & Ellis, 2018), (Littlewood,1994), sheen (2020).

The Role of Communicative and Traditional Methods on Teaching Vocabulary

Table 2

T-test Statistics on Differences between Communicative and Traditional Teaching Methods on Teaching Vocabulary

Communicative		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Traditional	1.00	102	65.9804	22.68247	2.24590	218	-2.972	.003	sig
Communicative	2.00	118	73.1780	12.39564	1.14111				

Note that table 2 presents analysis of the difference between CLT and GTM in teaching vocabulary and achieving communicative and grammatical competence. The mean calculated by experimental (CLT) and control group (GTM) are 65.9804 and 73.1780 and the standard deviation of 22.68247 and 12.39564, and the degree of freedom of 218. The P-Value obtained was 0.003 which was less than the level of significance of 0.05. This shows that there is significant difference in the effect of CLT over GTM. Hence, the hypothesis which earlier stated that there is no significant difference in the performance of L2 Learner exposed to CLT and was rejected. This is because there is statistically significant difference in the performance of students in CLT class compared to that of GTM; with CLT class performing better than the GTM class.

However, while measuring the efficacy of the two methods in teaching vocabulary, communicative method proved to be more impactful compared to traditional method as shown in Table 2 where the traditional approach has the mean of 65.9804 while communicative has 73.1780 and the p-value is .003 which is below .05. This shows statistical significance between the two approaches. This finding is in line with Dahlan A.S (2022) who discovered that the use of communicative language teaching method will improve students' English vocabulary.

The Role of Communicative and Traditional Methods on Teaching Written Composition

Table 3

T-test statistics on differences between communicative and traditional teaching methods on teaching written composition

Communicative		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Traditional	1.00	102	48.0098	13.42194	1.32897	218	-20.509	.000	sig
Communicative	2.00	118	79.5932	9.28581	.85483				

Note that table 3 shows analysis of the difference between CLT and GTM in teaching written composition and achieving communicative and grammatical competence. The mean calculated by experimental (CLT) and control groups (GTM) are 48.0098 and 79.5932 and the standard deviation of 1.32897 and 9.28581, and the degree of freedom of 218. The P-Value

obtained was 0.000 which was less than the level of significance of 0.05. This shows that there is significant difference in the effect of CLT over GTM. Hence, the hypothesis which earlier stated that there is no significant difference in the performance of L2 Learner exposed to CLT is rejected. This is because there is statistically significant difference in the performance of students in CLT class compared to that of GTM; with CLT class obtaining higher scores than the GTM class.

Furthermore, on testing the effectiveness of the two methods on teaching written composition, the statistical analysis, as displayed in Table 3, indicates that communicative method is more effective. This could be viewed in mean calculated by experimental (CLT) and control group (GTM) as 48.0098 and 79.5932 respectively, and the p-value of .000 which is below 0.05 proving a significant difference. This supports Mohammed and Ngozi's (2018) findings that senior secondary school students taught aspects of narrative essay and letter writing using CLT approach performed better in their essay writing.

The Role of Communicative and Traditional Methods on Teaching Oral Composition

Table 4

T-test statistics on differences between communicative and traditional teaching methods on teaching oral composition

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Traditional	1.00	102	39.9902	10.49988	1.03964	218	-39.066	.000	sig
Communicative	2.00	118	84.9322	6.30388	.58032				

Noted that table 4 contains analysis of the difference between CLT and GTM in teaching oral composition and achieving communicative and grammatical competence. The mean calculated by experimental (CLT) and control group (GTM) are 39.9902 and 84.9322 and the standard deviation of 10.49988 and 6.30388, and the degree of freedom of 218. The P-Value obtained was 0.000 which was less than the level of significance of 0.05. This shows that there is significant difference in the effect of CLT over GTM. Hence, the hypothesis as previously stated that there is no significant difference in the performance of L2 Learner exposed to CLT is rejected. This is because there is statistically significant difference in the performance of students in CLT class compared to that of GTM; with CLT class performance higher than that of class of GTM.

This means that in teaching oral compositions, the analysis reveals statistically significant differences between experimental and control groups with the former scoring high. This is evident in the calculated mean by the two groups at 84.9322 and 39.9902 respectively. Similarly, the P-value was 0.000, less than 0.05, proving the significant difference in the impact of CLT over GTM. This aligns with Nggawu and Thao's findings (2023) who demonstrate that the incorporation of CLT in teaching speaking positively impacts the speaking abilities of both introvert and extrovert students.

The Role of Communicative and Traditional Methods on Teaching oral English

Table 5

T-test statistics on differences between communicative and traditional teaching methods on teaching oral English

			Std. Deviation	Std. Error	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Communicative	N	Mean	n	Mean				
Traditional	1.00	102	41.5490	12.36942	218	-5.853	.000	sig
Communicative	2.00	118	57.8814	25.72410				

Note that table 5 contains analysis of the difference between CLT and GTM in teaching oral composition and achieving communicative and grammatical competence. The mean calculated by experimental (CLT) and control groups (GTM) are 41.5490 and 57.8814 and the standard deviation of 12.36942 and 2.36810, and the degree of freedom of 218. The P-Value obtained was .000 which was less than the level of significance of 0.05. This shows that there is significant difference in the effect of CLT over GTM. Hence, the hypothesis as earlier stated that there is no significant difference in the performance of L2 Learner exposed to CLT is rejected. This is because there is statistically significant difference in the performance of students in CLT class compared to that of GTM; with CLT class performing more creditably than the GTM class.

Discussion

The effectiveness of traditional method in both control and experimental groups in teaching grammar might be ascribed to its dominance in the Nigerian classrooms to the extent that teachers hardly teach using any method, say communicative, without consciously or otherwise switching to it. It is important to note that communicative method also has some limitations, thus, a sole reliance on it can also be problematic. For instance, without explicit instruction on grammatical rules, students may struggle to grasp the underlying mechanics of the language, leading to persistent errors in formal contexts (Ellis, 2003). Therefore, it is significant, at this juncture, to point out that the optimum approach lies in a balanced combination of the two methods. The traditional method can provide the foundation, introducing grammatical rules and concepts through clear explanations and initial practical drills. Communicative activities can then build upon this foundation, allowing students to use the structures they learnt in a meaningful and engaging way.

For instance, a lesson on past tense could begin with a clear explanation of the different verb forms and their uses. This can be followed by practice exercises to solidify understanding. The lesson can then transit into a role-playing activity where students use past tense verbs to recount a fictional event. This approach integrates both the accuracy focus of traditional methods with the fluency emphasis of communicative approaches. This balanced approach caters for different learning styles. Students who thrive on clear structure benefit from explicit instruction, while those who learn best through practice find value in communicative activities. Additionally, it ensures that students develop both grammatical accuracy and fluency, preparing them for success in a variety of language contexts.

This success of CLT in teaching vocabulary may be connected with the advantages the approach brings along over the traditional method which is largely characterized by rote memorization and decontextualized definitions. On the other hand, communicative teaching

method has the ability to foster deeper understanding and retention of vocabulary. By using newly acquired words in real-world contexts, such as role-playing activities, discussions, and simulations, students move beyond mere definition memorization (Yuliawati & Aprillia, 2019). They actively engage with the words, exploring their nuances and functions within a communicative framework (Anggraheni et al., 2020). This process leads to the formation of stronger memory associations, making the vocabulary more readily available for future use (Nation, 2023).

Similarly, communicative methods also enhance student motivation and engagement. Traditional method, with its emphasis on drill and repetition, can be tedious and demotivating. In contrast, communicative activities are inherently interactive and dynamic (Richards, 2022). Students have the opportunity to express themselves, collaborate with peers, and negotiate meaning, fostering a more enjoyable and engaging learning experience (Patmi & Sabaruddin, 2021). This increased motivation translates into a greater willingness to learn and retain new vocabulary. Moreover, communicative methods promote the development of essential language skills alongside vocabulary acquisition. As students interact and use newly learned words, they simultaneously refine their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Littlewood, 2024). This creates a holistic learning environment where various language skills reinforce and support each other, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of language use (Byram, 2019).

It is obvious that teaching written composition through traditional approach is characterized by focus on rigid structures and rote memorization of grammatical rules. However, the communicative approach offers a refreshing alternative, emphasizing the importance of writing as a tool for communication. This is evident from the nature of topics and methodology deployed in delivering the written composition classes through CLT which highly focuses on real-world problem-solving. Learners engage in activities that mirror authentic writing scenarios, such as composing emails, letters, reports, or narratives (Littlewood, 2024). This focus on a communicative goal motivates students to write with a clear audience in mind, encouraging them to tailor their language and content accordingly. By understanding the purpose and audience, students are more likely to craft engaging and effective written pieces (Hyland, 2020).

Moreover, communicative methods promote a student-centered learning environment. Collaborative writing activities, peer review sessions, and self-reflection exercises empower students to take ownership of their writing process. By receiving constructive feedback from peers and teachers, students develop critical thinking skills and learn to evaluate the effectiveness of their writing (Ferris, 2023). This collaborative approach fosters a sense of community and responsibility, encouraging students to actively participate in the learning process. Furthermore, the communicative approach encourages the development of essential writing skills beyond just grammar and mechanics. Activities that focus on brainstorming, outlining, and revising allow students to practise the entire writing process, not just the final product (Raines, 2021). This holistic approach equips students with the necessary tools to organize their thoughts, develop a coherent argument, and refine their writing style.

There is no gainsaying the rise of the communicative approach has revolutionized language teaching, fostering a more dynamic and engaging environment for developing oral skills unlike in the traditional method where students recite pre-written dialogues and complete fill-in-the-blank exercises, focusing on mastering grammatical structures in isolation (Littlewood, 2014), ignoring the dynamic nature of language and the importance of context in communication. The focus on accuracy in the traditional method can create a stressful learning environment. The fear of making mistakes also discourages students from taking risks and experimenting with language. This stifles creativity and hinders the development of critical thinking skills, essential for effective oral communication (Mackey & Mackey, 2014).

However, in CLT, students engage in activities that mirror authentic communication, such as role-playing, debates, and discussions (Richards, 2012). These activities encourage active participation, prompting students to think critically, organize their thoughts, and express themselves clearly. This would warrant shifts from perfect grammar to clear and effective communication.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the relevance, significance and suitability of CLT as the best teaching method that has the potentialities of enhancing the Katsina state secondary school students' communicative and linguistic competence. As presented earlier, the results of this research, except for teaching grammar, CLT proves to be the most effective method of teaching in the secondary school classrooms in Katsina State. This is evident in the statistical results on teaching vocabulary, written composition, oral composition and oral English. Therefore, it is important to stress that, as in accordance with the research findings, the communicative language teaching method offers a significant advantage in empowering secondary school learners in Katsina State. By fostering active participation, prioritizing communication skills over grammatical perfection, and developing pragmatic competence, CLT equips students with the tools to use English effectively in real-world situations. Although CLT has its own limitations, yet the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks, making it a valuable tool for educators seeking to empower their students in the diverse and dynamic landscape of multilingual classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers have strongly recommended the full implementation of CLT in all the secondary schools in Katsina State, especially at senior level in order to harness its potentialities and to address the most challenging language impediment in the state, which is low communicative competence in the use of the English language as a result of low exposure characterized by the traditional grammar method of teaching. However, to provide a holistic view of language teaching method, it is suggested that CLT and GTM be blended in teaching grammar in order to help students to learn and use the grammatical structures of English in a meaningful and engaging way.

Finally, for successful implementation of CLT in Katsina State Secondary School, teachers need to be more trained in order to equip them with the resourcefulness of CLT. Also, instructional materials or teaching aids have to be adequately provided and classrooms decongested so as to provide enabling and conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning of English as the prime medium of instruction in our schools in Nigeria, Hence, the researchers call on the concerned authorities, NGOs and stakeholders in the education sector to do the needful so as to pave way for the implementation of CLT.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the entire Umaru Musa Yar'adua University community, specifically the members of faculty board, Faculty of Humanities for their invaluable contributions to this research project. Their support has been instrumental in shaping the direction and outcomes of this study. Additionally, we extend our appreciation to Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) for their financial assistance, which made this research possible. We are also grateful to all participants who generously shared their time and insights, without whom this research would not have been feasible. Finally, we acknowledge the roles of our colleagues and associates for their thoughtful discussions and feedback throughout the research process.

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