

Afghan EFL Instructors' Use of Teaching Methods

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the Afghan EFL instructors' use of English teaching methods. It also studied whether the instructors' gender had any significant impact on their responses. A survey questionnaire with 35 closed-ended items was utilized to collect the data from 50 EFL instructors who were teaching English in various English language centers in Takhar. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The results of the study revealed that the Afghan EFL instructors frequently used the Grammar Translation Method and communicative language method in their English classes. Moreover, the EFL instructors sometimes used the Audiolingual Method, the Direct Method, the Total Physical Response and the Silent Way. The Silent Way was the least frequently used method in Afghan EFL classrooms. The results also showed that there were not any statistically significant differences between female and male instructors' response. The study suggests an eclectic use of methods in English classes in order to make English learning more meaningful to students.

1. Introduction

English language has been one of the major courses in schools and universities of Afghanistan for years (Orfan, 2021a). English education was banned during the Taliban Regime during which girls were not allowed to go to school let alone university (Orfan, 2021b; Noori, et al., 2020). The use of English has exponentially increased in Afghanistan since the arrival of the international community particularly the USA in Afghanistan in 2001. Currently, English is used in many areas in the country. It is widely used in education, business, economy, government, and media (e.g., social networking sites) (Orfan, 2020a; Akramy, 2021; Daqiq, 2021).

English education starts from grade four in public schools and from grade one in most private schools. It is the only foreign language taught as a required course in all public and private schools. English is taught as a required course in all fields of study at the university. It is taught for at least two semesters. English plays a significant role in employment and promotion in public higher education institutes. Applicants of academic jobs in public universities are required to take an English proficiency test, which is the gatekeeper for the specialized test. Applicants of master's and doctoral programs in public universities are required to pass an English proficiency test otherwise they are not allowed to participate in the specialized test. Certification of instructors' English proficiency by an accredited English body is required for promotion (Orfan & Noori, 2021; Orfan, 2020b).

In addition, instructors are required to publish at least an article in an international journal for promotion, and most of the instructors publish in English although many of them cannot understand English. They write their articles in national languages and they have them translated into English for publication. More recently, the Afghan Ministry of Higher education has required translation of a book from an international language to a national language for promotion from a particular academic rank to another one. Most of the Instructors prefer to translate an English book into one of the national languages (Orfan, 2020b). In addition, English is important in Afghan economy and social media. English has become one of the major requirements for almost all types of jobs. Afghans with better proficiency in English receive a monthly salary, which is 10 to 15 times higher than that of those who work for governmental organizations. English is widely used by Afghan politicians and journalists on social networks mainly twitter. GIZ-Afghanistan (2014) studied social media use in Kabul and six Northern provinces. A total of 1184 individuals

participated in the study. It revealed that English was the most prominent language in social media use. Over 60% of the participants used English to access the social networks.

There are many English language centers in Afghanistan that provide English education for children and adults and the number is growing since the demand for English education has been on the rapid rise since 2001. Moreover, the US and the UK government have funded many projects and programs that aimed to provide English education for Afghans in particular government employees (Daqiq & Hashemi, 2021). These English language centers utilize various textbooks and some of them have developed their own English textbooks, which in many instances lack coherence and authentic teaching materials. The vast majority of the self-developed textbooks do not meet the basic requirements required for developing textbooks. They are developed by individuals who lack expertise in learning theories and teaching methods. Furthermore, EFL instructors make use of a variety of methods to deliver English lessons to their students (Hashemi & Kew, 2020). The current study investigates EFL instructors' use of methods, i.e., GTM, DM, SW, ALM, TPR and CLT. It also studies whether the participants' gender has any significant impact on their responses.

2. Literature Review

There are a wide variety of methods for teaching foreign languages particularly English and some of them are widely used in Afghanistan. Grammar Translation Method was first introduced in Germany particularly in Prussia; therefore, it is also known as the Prussian Method. It is one of the oldest methods of foreign language teaching. It dominated foreign language teaching for a century. The method is also known as the classical method since it was first used to teach classical languages, e.g., Latin. The method aims to teach foreign languages by grammar and translation through which students master the knowledge of languages. They learn a wide variety of grammatical rules and apply the knowledge for the interpretation of texts with the help of a dictionary. Students get familiar with the grammar of their native language through the study of the grammar of the target language, which helps them speak and write their native language better. The crucial purpose of the grammar translation method was facilitating language learning and its central feature was replacing traditional texts with exemplary statements (Rivers, 2018; Zhou & Niu, 2015; Freeman, 2000; Chastain, 1971).

The Direct Method emerged as a response to the Grammar Translation Method in Germany and France in 20th century. It is one of the methods of teaching foreign languages that focuses on the use of the target language in the classroom. It discourages the use of students' first language in the classroom. It actively gets students involved in the process of learning the target language and students are exposed to everyday language. As a result, there are a wide range of interactions and spontaneous use of the language. No or little attention is paid to translation and grammar. The focus of the lessons is on good pronunciation and phonetic symbols are introduced to students before they are exposed to standard writing examples. The principle of the Direct Method is establishing a direct relationship between the target language words, phrases and their meanings. It implies that students' first language does not have any intervention in the learning process. Therefore, students are encouraged to understand words and expressions of the target language as they stand without learning their meanings through native language (Brown, 2000; Richards and Rodgers, 2007; Bussmann, 2006).

The Audiolingual Method emerged due to the necessity to have good oral and aural skills of a foreign language during and after the Second World War (Stern, 2001). The method emphasizes teaching of listening and speaking skills before reading and writing. Dialogues make up the major form of language presentation and drills are used as the main training techniques. The use of students' first language is discouraged and it is rarely used in classrooms. However, it is not as restrictive as it is in the Direct Method (Richards & Rodgers, 2007; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; White, 1989).

The Silent Way method was devised by Caleb Gattegno and it is based on the premise that the instructor should be silent as much as possible in the classroom and students should be encouraged through gestures to produce as much language as possible. According to the proponents of this method, learning takes when the learner discovers and creates rather than remembering and repeating what is to be learned. The Silent Way favors the tradition that considers learning as a problem-solving, creative and discovering activity in which students are viewed as major actors rather than just a bench-bound listener (Cook, 2013; Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Gattegno, 2010).

Total physical response (TPR) was originally developed by an American psychologist in the 1960s. TPR is a language teaching method which focuses on the coordination of speech and action. It initially focuses on listening and it is linked to physical actions aimed to reinforce comprehension of particular basic expressions. Instructors using this method attempt to teach the language through physical activities and tasks. The premise behind this method is the fact that adults are like children in language acquisition and they should go through the same processes through which children learn their first language (Liu & Chen, 2015; Brown, 2007; Richards & Rogers 2014; Asher, 1969).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach to teaching languages that focuses on interaction, which is the means and the ultimate of purpose of studying a language. According to this approach, the major goal of language learning is to

communicate in the target language either verbally or orally. Using this method, students are encouraged to interact with one another and the instructor. The use of authentic language and the use of the target language in the class and outside the classroom are highly encouraged. Learners are also encouraged to talk about their personal experiences with their classmates and instructors expose students to a wide variety of activities in order to develop their language skills in various situations. In this approach, teachers function as a facilitator rather than an instructor (Brown, 1987; Nunan, 1991; Mitchell, 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Richards, 2005; Spada, 2007).

Hazratzad and Gheitanchian (2009) studied EFL instructors' attitudes towards GTM, ALM, SW, TPR, and communicative language teaching and their students' achievement. They used a questionnaire and interviews to collect data from 594 female and male instructors with age ranges varying from 24 to 68 years and with teaching experience from 1 to 40 years. The findings showed that the participants had varying attitudes towards EFL teaching methods (i.e., Grammar Translation Method, 42%; Audio-lingual Method, 50%; Silent Way, 81%; Total Physical Response, 82%; communicative language teaching, 73%). Chang (2011) studied EFL teachers' attitudes towards communicative language teaching in Taiwanese college. He used an explanatory mixed method to collect data for the study. The findings showed that EFL teachers held favorable attitudes towards communicative language teaching and they displayed characteristics of CLT in their teaching activities. Moreover, EFL teachers believed that CLT could make English teaching more effective and meaningful.

Durrani (2016) studied Attitudes of Undergraduate EFL students towards the Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching. She collected data through a questionnaire from EFL students in Baluchistan. The author used SPSS to analyze the data. The findings showed that EFL students had more positive attitude towards the Grammar Translation Method than communicative language teaching. Similarly, Hounhanou (2020) studied the effectiveness of total physical response in vocabulary learning. The author used observation and questionnaire to collect data from 150 EFL students and 26 EFL teachers. The study found that the use of total physical response was effective in learning vocabulary. That is, teaching English vocabulary through total physical response allows students learn faster and easier.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 50 EFL instructors who were teaching English in various English language centers in Taliqan City, Takhar. Only 10 of the participants were female. Around 45% of the participants were holding a bachelor's degree while 35% of them were pursuing their undergraduate studies at the time of the study. Around 20% of the participants had a community college degree. They were between 20-32 years of age at the time of the study. The participants of the study were speakers of three different languages, i.e., Dari, Pashto and Uzbek.

3.2 Instrument

The authors carried out a literature review in order to design the questionnaire. They developed the 25 questionnaire items after careful review of the target methods. They also adapted 10 items from other studies (Hounhanou, 2020; Hazratzad & Gheitanchian, 2009; Chang, 2011). The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part sought the participants' demographic information. The second part composed of 35 items that aimed to elicit the participants' response about their use of methods. The participants were asked to indicate how often they used each method on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = frequently, 4 = very frequently, and 5 = always).

The questionnaire was given to four of the authors' colleagues in the Department of English for revision and improvement. After receiving their feedback on the questionnaire, the problematic items were recognized and edited. The wording of the questionnaire is very important and for the questionnaire to be successful, the researcher must conduct a pilot test (Cohen et al., 2000). A pilot study was carried out with 10 teachers selected from two English language centers in Taliqan to measure the reliability of the 35 items of the questionnaire. They were required to respond to 35 items on a 5-point Likert Scale. Using SPSS version 26.0, the reliability analysis of questionnaire items was examined. The analysis showed that the value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.810 (Table 1), which indicates high internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The questionnaire items were appropriate for the research.

Table 1. Reliability value of questionnaire items

N. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
35	.810

3.3 Procedure and analysis

The data were collected from 50 EFL teachers who were teaching English in various English language centers based in Takhar Province, a northeastern province of Afghanistan. The authors explained the research and its purpose to the participants and asked them if they were willing to take part in the research. They were required to express their agreement for participating in the research by reading and signing the consent letter attached to the questionnaire. They were made sure of the confidentiality of

their responses. The participants were asked to read the instructions and complete the questionnaire. The researchers informed that there were no true or false responses, what mattered was their response to each given statement. They also encouraged the respondents to ask about any instruction or item that seemed unclear or ambiguous to them. It took the respondents 10–15 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. The data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were employed to determine the frequency, the mean, and the standard deviation of the data. The independent sample *T*-test was carried out to explore the differences between two groups of the participants, i.e. gender.

4. Results

4.1 Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

Descriptive statistics was conducted to determine EFL instructors' frequency use of the Grammar Translation Method. As Table 2 shows, the overall mean score for GTM is 3.5. The first item sought the participants' response about teaching vocabulary as isolated words, and it received a mean score of 3.7. Two statements that sought the participants' response about translation in the classroom received a mean score of over 3.50. It is concluded that translation is very widespread in Afghan EFL classrooms. Furthermore, two items that elicited the participants' response about students' first language use received a mean score of over 3.5, which indicates that the students' first language is frequently used in EFL classrooms. Thus, it is concluded that EFL instructors frequently use GTM in teaching English.

Table 2. EFL instructors' frequency use of GTM

No	Statement	Mean	SD
1	I teach vocabulary as isolated words.	3.74	1.14
2	I translate passages from English to their mother tongue.	3.62	1.05
3	I ask students to translate passages from English to their mother tongue.	3.51	1.07
4	I often use students' mother language in the class.	3.52	1.11
5	I use students' mother tongue to explain grammar.	3.64	1.14
Overall		3.54	0.61

4.2 Audiolingual method

The analysis of the descriptive statistics shows that the overall mean score for audiolingual method is 2.68 (Table 3). Moreover, all the six items that sought that participants' response about the use of different elements of the audiolingual method received a mean score of less than 3. Therefore, it is concluded that EFL instructors sometimes use audiolingual method in teaching English.

Table 3. EFL instructors' frequency use of Audiolingual method

No	Statement	Mean	SD
6	I ask students to repeat each line of the new dialogue several times.	2.74	1.337
7	I teach grammatical points through examples and drills.	2.44	1.280
8	I prevent students from making errors since they lead to formation of bad habits.	2.86	1.604
9	I use real life conversations to help my students learn English naturally.	2.48	1.403
10	I ask my students to repeat a language point many times in order to form a habit.	2.97	1.286
11	I ask students to repeat each line of the new dialogue several times.	2.56	1.343
Overall		2.68	0.499

4.3 Direct Method

The authors used descriptive statistics to explore the participants' frequency use of the Direct Method. As Table 4 shows, the overall mean score for the Direct Method is 2.6. One item that elicited the participants' response about the use of the target language received a mean score of 3.50, which means that the EFL instructors frequently encourage students to use the target language. All

other items received a mean score of less than 2.7. Thus, it is concluded that EFL instructors sometimes use the Direct Method in teaching English.

Table 4. EFL instructors' frequency use of the Direct Method

No	Statement	Mean	SD
12	I use questions and answers intensively in a structured manner to teach new points.	2.40	1.125
13	I teach vocabulary through pantomimes and real life objects.	2.06	1.038
14	I use students' mother tongue in the class.	2.70	1.266
15	I encourage my students to use the target language as much as possible.	3.50	1.129
16	I use visuals and real objects to teach English vocabulary to my students.	2.44	0.812
Overall		2.62	0.597

4.4 Silent Way

The analysis of the descriptive statistics shows that the overall mean score for the Silent Way is 1.87 (Table 5). Furthermore, all the items that elicited the participants' response about various elements of Silent Way received a mean score of less than 2.30. Thus, the authors conclude that the Silent way is less widely used by Afghan EFL instructors.

Table 5. EFL instructors' frequency use of Silent Way

No	statement	Mean	SD
1	Learning should be accompanied by colorful physical objects such as rods and charts for vocabulary.	1.42	0.971
2	I try to avoid interfering in the learning process of my learners as much as possible.	2.04	0.727
3	I give the maximum time for my students to talk.	2.28	1.161
4	I provide directions for my students silently.	1.76	0.797
Overall		1.875	0.513

4.5 Total Physical Response (TPR)

Descriptive statistics was employed to determine the frequency use of the Total Physical Response. As Table 6 shows, the overall mean score for the TPR is 2.49. Only one item that sought the participants' response about providing a cheerful environment for learning English received a mean score of 3.76, which indicates that EFL instructors frequently try to make the environment cheerful for learning English. However, all other items received a mean score of less than 2.70. Therefore, the authors conclude that EFL instructors sometimes use the Total Physical Response in teaching English.

Table 6. EFL instructors' frequency use of the total physical response

No	Statement	Mean	SD
1	I give verbal commands to my students and they respond with whole-body gestures.	1.86	0.833
2	I present a lot of listening lessons to my students.	2.66	1.379
3	I use role plays in English classes.	2.52	1.182
4	I try to provide a cheerful environment for my English students.	3.76	0.847
5	I use a wide variety of realia, posters, and props in my classes.	1.66	0.961
Overall		2.49	0.52

4.6 Communicative language teaching

The last five items of the questionnaire sought the participants' response about their use of the communicative language teaching. Descriptive statistics was used to determine the frequency use of the method by EFL instructors. As Table 7 shows, the overall mean score for communicative language teaching is 3.46. Furthermore, all the items that elicited the participants' response about various elements of communicative language teaching received a mean score of over 3. Thus, it is concluded that EFL instructors frequently use the communicative language teaching in English classrooms.

Table 7. EFL instructors' frequency use of the communicative language teaching

No	Statement	Mean	SD
1	I make use of activities which require the use of more than one skill (speaking and listening in the same task).	3.44	1.013
2	I use authentic texts in my classes.	3.22	1.325
3	I try to link classroom learning with language activation outside the classroom.	3.38	1.008
4	I provide activities for my students to interact together in the target language.	3.86	1.262
5	I engage my students in real-life communication activities in the class.	3.42	1.513
Overall		3.46	0.84919

4.7 Participants' use of methods and gender

The authors conducted the Independent Samples T-test to determine the differences between female and male participants. As Table 8 shows, the p-value for all methods is greater than the alpha level (0.05). Thus, it is concluded that there are not statistically significant differences between female and male EFL instructors in their use of methods.

Table 8. Participants' frequency use of methods by gender

Method	Gender	N	Mean	SD	P-value
Grammar Translation Method	Female	10	3.66	0.389	0.506
	Male	40	3.52	0.653	
Audiolingual Method	Female	10	2.63	0.543	0.727
	Male	40	2.69	0.493	
Direct Method	Female	10	2.92	0.526	0.075
	Male	40	2.55	0.595	
Silent Way	Female	10	1.63	0.603	0.084
	Male	40	1.93	0.476	
Total Physical Response	Female	10	2.50	0.316	0.958
	Male	40	2.49	0.567	
Communicative language teaching	Female	10	3.12	1.071	0.315
	Male	40	3.43	0.788	

5. Discussion

The study investigated the Afghan EFL instructors' use of methods in English classrooms. It also investigated the impact of the participants' gender on their responses. The results of the study showed that the Grammar Translation Method was frequently used by the Afghan EFL instructors in teaching English. The result is in line with the findings of the study by Fereidoni et al. (2018) and Durrani (2016) who reported that their participants were more satisfied with the Grammar Translation Method than other ones. However, it is not on a par with the results of the study by Hazratzad and Gheitanchian (2009) who reported that their participants held more favorable attitudes towards the Audiolingual Method, the Silent Way and the Total Physical Response.

Several factors can account for the widespread use of the Grammar Translation Method in Afghan EFL classrooms. The majority of Afghan EFL instructors in English language centers particularly those based in remote cities are not qualified English teachers. Almost none of them hold a TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of other languages) certificate. The authors know many EFL

instructors who studied English for a year or so and then started teaching English. Another reason is the textbooks used by English language centers. Many of English language centers utilize their self-developed English textbooks that have failed to take the learning theories and teaching methods into consideration. Most of their exercises require the English instructor to use the Grammar Translation Method. Lack of training workshop for English instructors is another major factor why English instructors favor the Grammar Translation Method. EFL instructors rarely receive training workshop on teaching methods when they are hired to teach English.

The findings of the study also showed that the Audiolingual Method, the Direct Method, The Silent Way and the Total Physical Response were less widely used by the Afghan EFL instructors in English classrooms. However, the results showed that the Silent Way was the least favorable English teaching method. The Afghan EFL instructors rarely used it in their English teaching activities. Furthermore, the findings showed that the participants frequently used communicative language teaching in their English classes. The finding is consistent with that of the study by Zulu (2019). This can be justified by the fact that some English language centers use English textbooks, e.g., American Headway Series, Interchange Series developed by expert textbook developers. These textbooks favor communicative language teaching and almost all the exercises require Instructors and students to interact with one another. The study revealed that there were not any statistically significant differences between participants' responses by their gender.

6. Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the use of EFL methods by the Afghan EFL instructors in English classrooms. It also studied the impact of gender on the instructors' responses. The findings showed that the Afghan EFL instructors frequently used the Grammar Translation Method and communicative language method in their English classes. Furthermore, they sometimes used the Audiolingual Method, the Direct Method, the Total Physical Response and the Silent way. However, the least widely used method was the Silent Way. The participants' gender did not have any significant impact on their use of methods. The study suggests English instructors to be eclectic in their use of methods. Considering the context, they should use a little bit of every method in order to personalize English lessons and make English learning more meaningful to students.

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