



Perception on the Effectiveness of Method in Teaching English as a Second Language to 21st Century Learners

Dr. Famarz Samifanni ¹, Rose Leslie R. Gumanit ²

¹Orthoptics Department, Fukuoka International University of Health and Welfare, Fukuoka 〒814-0001, Sawara Ku, Momochihama 3-6-40, Japan.

²College of Education, Biliran Province State University, 6543, Philippines

Corresponding author: Famarz Samifanni; fred sami(at)takagigakuen.ac.jp

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Abstract

Numerous studies revealed to us that rote memorization is an ineffective learning approach and the teacher-centered or traditional instruction, versus student-centered instruction, may not provide the most efficient outcomes for students' learning. The focus of this study was to assess the Perception on the Effectiveness of Method in Teaching English as a Second Language to 21st Century Learners. Using the descriptive-correlational research design, the study utilized a survey questionnaire as the main data gathering tool and a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire for the focus group discussion. It was revealed that the teachers are using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) due to its effectiveness in managing large classes. The preference of 21st-century learners on CLT strengthens their use of the target language. Twenty-first century ESL students highly exposed to CLT improve their fluency, accuracy, and competence. The fundamental role of education is to prepare the 21st century learners to become assets and responsible members of our society. With the changes and improvements which come with time, this importance of education's role remains. Recommendations for future research were proposed.

Keywords: class size, ESL, learning, pedagogy, student preference, teaching methods

1. Introduction

The teaching of English has been debated as to which method gives the best results. For decades, English language teachers in Asian countries have been doing their best to ensure that all their learners can spell, read, write, and speak English fluently. The value of the English language is being shown within the curriculum, where English as a subject is introduced in the primary years and treated as one of the core subjects in grade school until high school, and even college.

Not only do English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors must master the subject content, but they must also employ philosophies within the course of obtaining and learning the English language to help language learners acquire the complete skills to communicate in the target language ^[1].

In 2003, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed Executive Order No. 210, which aimed in "establishing the policy to strengthen the use of the English language as a medium of instruction in the educational system. It is stated in section 1, that the English language shall be used as the primary medium of instruction in all public and private institutions of learning in the secondary level, including those established as laboratory and/or experimental schools, and non-formal, and vocational or technical educational institutions."

According to the latest English proficiency index ^[2], the Philippines is ranked 20th out of 100 countries. An alarming decline from its 14th spot from the last year. This is a clear manifestation of the kind of teaching being implemented in public schools. English competence was also mentioned by Murallo ^[3] who cited Rex Wallen Tan, the general manager of Hopkins International Partners, Inc. According to Tan, a Philippine college graduate's average score was 63.14, according to the results of the Test of English for International Communication; which is very low compared to its contemporaries in South East Asia.

This displays uniformity with the 2018 results of the National Achievement Test (NAT) signifying a weakening in the quality of basic Philippine education. As Albano Jr. ^[4] reported, poor student performance was manifested through the mean percentage score (MPS) of 37.44 for Grade 6; the lowest in history, and 44.59 for Grade 10. Since English language ability is strongly linked to academic performance, teachers must see to it that they are delivering the needs of these students ^[5]. As a medium of instruction in Philippine classrooms, English helps the teaching-learning process in a logical and organized manner. Thus, it should be reinforced to enable teacher education institutions (TEIs) to sustain the best manpower needed by the academic world ^[6]. Considering the standard class size of 35 to 40 which sometimes exceeds 50 students having one teacher facilitating the lesson, the 21st-century Filipino learners are facing an issue of quality and focus of teaching in this kind of scenario especially in rural areas

of the country. Despite the high exposure in an ESL environment with English being one among the national languages only second to Filipino, these students fail to communicate in the English language; an evident proof of the question on how the English language is being taught in schools ^[7].

This study is considered novel because of its potential contribution in dealing with Special Science Class students in the Science Technology and Engineering program implementing high schools. With the plethora of teaching methods, this study will help public high school teachers effectively manage and facilitate an active and engaging ESL class.

During the American occupation, claimed Chavez ^[8], the English language was introduced to the country and still enjoying its official standing as “accepted language.” This indicates that extensive exposure to the language enables people who speak it fluently communicate. Chavez ^[8] further noted that it was impressing that Filipinos who never went abroad were nonetheless fluent in English. He further stated that it is all in the approach to learning English where English is taught in schools and provides an array of exposure to its population. However, for English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Philippines, Kirkpatrick ^[9] argued that instead of concentrating with a definite “English variety”, the Philippines’ academic institutions taught English within the regional context.

Ayeni ^[10] posted that teaching is an incessant procedure involving the generation of improvement in learners utilizing suitable approaches. Also, to yield these improvements in learners, the methods in teaching teachers are using must fit the topic ^[11]. Additionally, teaching methods are chiefly effective when it is customized to the students’ needs ^[12]. Therefore, effective teaching approaches catering the learners’ requirements and preference affect their scholastic achievements ^[13].

In the Philippines, the introduction of innovative language teaching methods is constantly welcome as these “contributes to the teachers’ bag of tricks in the classroom” ^[14] (p. 26). Schools use ESL in main subject areas which demands prior mastery of the English language to enable comprehension. It is the call for educators to assess their approaches and practices to improve students’ performance ^[15] in the 21st century classroom. Meanwhile, the Department of Education (DepEd) promoted a main language teaching practice in the Philippines; Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach among others. Fascinatingly, the popularity of the method is equal to the memoranda, circulars, and training programs the department is providing ^[14].

There is indeed no specific teaching method that will fit to the individual differences of the learners, thus a combination of these methods and approaches could be applicable. However, these studies on ELT in the Philippines does not touch the impact of these methods in the academic performance of the Special Science Class (SSC) learners which prompted the conduct of this study to identify which method could bring the best academic potential of these brilliant learners. Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe, etal. ^[16] claimed that different contexts congregate on the “three types of knowledge, as necessary for the 21st century: foundational, meta, and humanistic.” Despite the permanence and novelty, what matters is achieving the objectives of education.

Gone were the days where the classroom is “instructor-led”; the 21st century provides a transformation of instruction from the traditional to a “flexible” hands-on learning environment of “co-creation, co-learning, collaboration and transparency” ^[17]. There is a novel class of learners nowadays. This “new” generation of learners are different from the rest. All their lives, they were

surrounded by technology and are expected to be at par sophisticated academic standards. For them, asking “why” is vital as inquiring “how”. This set of learners are likewise anticipated to comprehend complex and complicated ideas, procedures and philosophies. This set of learners are named the “21st Century Learners”.

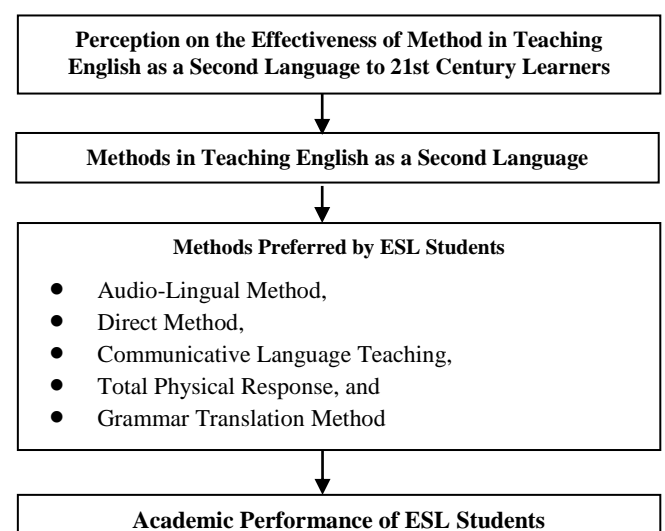
21st century learners are confident to share their ingenuity. They are motivated by failure and sees it as a challenge. Also, they love to brainstorm for new ideas. At a glance, they might seem radical but they too are practical. For them and their wide sense of creativity and ingenuity, their opportunities and chances are endless.

These 21st century learners prefer creative and innovative means of collaboration. PowerPoint presentation is considered primitive. They are interested in making vlogs, webpages or website to show their new ideas. Within a group, they show open-mindedness and exhibit critical thinking beyond their young years. To these learners, collaboration is the key to their learning. These learners are entitled to their thoughts and intend to vocalize them in unconventional ways using all platforms.

This study is anchored on Vygotsky’s ^[18] Socio-Cultural Theory. This theory was expounded to second language acquisition (SLA), and intensive emphasized language acquisition with the “socio-cultural perspective” or how a second language can be absorbed as learners work together and relate with one another.

The main principle of Socio-Cultural Theory stated that knowledge and mental progress (including language) occur as a consequence of social exchanges. The theory claimed that “while human neurobiology is a necessary condition for higher-order thinking, the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through interaction within social and material environments” ^[19].

This study primarily aimed to assess which teaching method is employed in ESL instruction to the 21st century SSC learners. The conceptualization of this research involved the teaching methods, academic performance of the students, the preference of students towards the teaching methods, and the relationship of these methods to the students’ academic performance. This was pursued by determining first the independent variables which are the methods in teaching ESL namely: audio-lingual method, direct method, communicative language teaching, grammar-translation method, and total physical response. The dependent variables academic performance of ESL students and methods preferred by ESL students were also determined as the modifying variable as the outcome of this research. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables is shown in Figure 1.



The study aimed to assess the perception on the effectiveness of method in teaching English as a second language to 21st century learners.

Specifically, it intended to:

- Determine the methods in teaching English as a Second Language;
- Determine the academic performance of 21st century ESL students;
- Find out which method is preferred by 21st century ESL students; and
- Ascertain the significant relationship between the methods in teaching ESL and the academic performance of 21st century ESL students.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the methods in teaching ESL and the academic performance of 21st century ESL students.

2 Materials and Methods

This section presents the methods used in the study. It encompasses the research design, participants, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis.

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. This design is best suited for this study because it analyzes the survey of the methods employed by the ESL teachers and the respondents' answers to the interview.

Also, this design can be useful in expanding quantitative data through a collection of open-ended qualitative data^[20].

2.2 Participants

This study involved a total enumeration of participants, or 19 teachers handling English subject, 996 Grade 7-10 students in the Special Science Class in Biliran Division. Purposive sampling was used in obtaining the qualitative data utilizing 50 Grade-10 students among the participating schools, who took part in the focus group discussion. For ethical considerations, pseudonyms were used to identify all the participants in the entire article. The distribution of participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants across the Secondary Schools in Biliran Division

School	No. of Teachers	No. of Students	No. of Students for FGD
1. Almeria National High School	5	143	10
2. Biliran Science High School	3	297	10
3. Caibiran National High School	6	225	10
4. Naval School of Fisheries	1	209	10
5. Tucdao National High School	4	122	10
Total	19	996	50

2.3 Instruments

This research utilized a survey questionnaire as the main instrument and an open-ended interview guide as instruments in

the gathering of data. The questions were adapted from the teaching method inventory developed by Zoreh, et al. and Greta Gorsuch which was slightly modified to cater to the objectives of this study. The questionnaire is divided into three parts:

2.3.1 Part I served to determine the methods in teaching English as a Second Language.

2.3.2 Part II elicited the academic performance of the ESL students, through their Mean Percentile Score during the first quarter. These were secondary data taken from the Office of Biliran Division.

2.3.3 Part III ascertained the method preferred by ESL students.

2.4 Data collection

The data collection eventually follows the following phases: modification and production of the structured questionnaire; securing permission from the Schools Division Superintendent to distribute survey questionnaire; personal distribution and recovery of the questionnaire; data grouping and tabulation with statistical treatment for analysis and interpretation; and drawing out the findings and conclusion of the study.

2.5 Data analysis

Data in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentage and weighted mean, while thematic analysis was used on the data obtained through the open-ended questionnaire. The thematic analysis was used in coding and interpreting the gathered data from the respondents to efficiently analyze the responses. Pearson-product moment correlation was also utilized in determining the significant relationship among the variables of the study.

Results and Discussion

This qualitative research study utilized survey questionnaire and open-ended interview guide to looking into the methods employed in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to the 21st-century learners. Data analysis revealed a positive impact of Communicative Language Teaching on the academic performance of students.

It is interesting to note that the teachers are using and have high regard for Communicative Language Teaching especially in facilitating large classes. Therefore, teachers allow ESL learners to practice the target language in a real-life context. The 21st century ESL students who are highly exposed in Communicative Language Teaching yield high academic performance. This is a good manifestation despite the big class size of 35 to 40 students in the Special Science Classes.

The 21st-century students prefer to be taught using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). With CLT, students feel more confident in using the target language in context, and teachers can manage the class in groups with ease despite the huge class size in public schools. Moreover, CLT strengthens target language usage; thus, improve the fluency, accuracy, and competence of the students. Among the variables of the study, teaching methods particularly the CLT affects the students' academic performance. With teachers employing CLT and students preferring the method, the MPS of the 21st-century learners yield higher than the national target (75%) and it is expected that these students perform above the average classes.

After careful collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, the following vital information was unravelled based on the sequence

of the objectives with their corresponding analysis and textual presentations of the interpretations it contains.

Methods in Teaching English as a Second Language

Table 2 shows the methods in teaching English as a Second Language namely: Audio-Lingual Method, Direct Method, Communicative Language Teaching, Total Physical Response, and Grammar Translation Method. Among the five teaching methods, teachers handling English subjects strongly agree on the use of CLT with an average weighted mean (AWM) of 4.72 while the Grammar Translation Method got an AWM of 3.56 respectively.

The data suggest that the teachers allow students to get into groups and discuss answers to problem-solving activities; use authentic texts and communicative activities that accommodate real-life language use; employ role-play to encourage student-student communication, and assign activities that require group and pair work.

Table 2: Methods in Teaching English as a Second Language

Indicators	WM	Interpretation
Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)		
1. The teacher teaches grammar by not providing explicit grammar rules, but by examples and drills.	4.16	Agree
2. The teacher gives more importance on pronunciation as a classroom exercise.	4.21	Agree
3. The teacher plays audio tapes that feature native English speakers' conversation exchanges and ask students to answer questions related to the conversation.	4.26	Strongly Agree
4. The teacher allows students to memorize an English dialog and allows them to practice the dialog with a partner.	4.26	Strongly Agree
AWM	4.22	Strongly Agree
Direct Method (DM)		
1. The teacher uses pictures and other realias for the students to make connections between words and associated objects.	4.47	Strongly Agree
2. The teacher asks questions in target language and insist that students reply in complete sentences.	4.05	Agree
3. The teacher uses material of the target language and gives insights using the target language.	4.47	Strongly Agree
4. The teacher does error correction in different ways like peer correction, self-correction, etc.	4.37	Strongly Agree
AWM	4.34	Strongly Agree
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)		

1. The teacher gives students the opportunity to get into groups and discuss answers to problem-solving activities.	4.79	Strongly Agree
2. The teacher uses authentic texts and communicative activities which accommodate real life language use.	4.47	Strongly Agree
3. The teacher employs role play to encourage student-student communication.	4.74	Strongly Agree
4. The assigns activities that require group/pair work.	4.89	Strongly Agree
AWM	4.72	Strongly Agree
Total Physical Response (TPR)		
1. The teacher gives commands through one word along with gestures such as pointing, which provides opportunities for initiating the interaction within students.	3.95	Agree
2. The teacher uses improvisation (I say, you do it) in teaching literature.	4.05	Agree
3. The teacher pays more attention to whether students can follow oral instructions.	4.26	Agree
4. The teacher gives tasks to students wherein they do some task or demonstrate comprehension by performing prescribed motions.	4.05	Agree
AWM	4.07	Agree
Grammar Translation Method (GTM)		
1. The teacher uses his/her native language rather than English to explain terms or concepts that are difficult to understand.	3.47	Not Sure
2. The teacher uses students' native language rather than English to explain terms or concepts that are difficult to understand.	3.74	Agree
3. The teacher uses grammatical rules to explain complex English sentences to students.	4.79	Strongly Agree
4. The teacher asks students to memorize new vocabulary or phrases without showing them how to use the words in context.	2.53	Disagree
AWM	3.56	Agree
Overall AWM	4.20	Agree

This finding means that ESL teachers are using CLT to accommodate the large-class size; where students can communicate in the target language, solve problems collaboratively, and practice the target language in reality. Being facilitators of learning, teachers give more opportunities for students to work as a team using the target language and provide more freedom to engage and express themselves. The use of CLT

is well-favored by the teachers as campaigned in the DepEd Order No. 50, s. 2004.

This finding agrees to the study of Gallaron ^[21], who found out that the teachers' main approach in teaching ESL and their effect on the grammar knowledge of the high school students was CLT. Although some studies emphasized that grammar is neglected in CLT, Canale and Swain ^[22] suggested that grammar was significant. Likewise, the findings of Savignon ^[23] emphasized the effectiveness of meaning-based self-expression in enhancing communication than grammar teaching. Moreover, the teachers find CLT effective in managing a huge class size.

Academic Performance of 21st century ESL students

The academic performance of the 21st century ESL students was based on their class performance in their Grade Level Mean Percentile Score (MPS) for the first quarter presented in Table 3. As depicted in the table, SSC students gained a class performance of 85.15 percent. Grade 10 class has an MPS of 88.27 being the highest while Grade 8 class got the lowest MPS of 82.69.

Table 3: Academic Performance of 21st century ESL Students

Grade Level	Average MPS
Grade 7	85.22
Grade 8	82.69
Grade 9	84.42
Grade 10	88.27
Average	85.15

The result signifies that 21st century SSC students perform well academically having an above-average MPS. This a clear manifestation that the methods employed by ESL teachers are deemed effective, knowing that the learners are from the Special Science Curriculum, where students are expected to perform above the average students in regular classes. However, teachers must guarantee that all and everyone in the group is vigorously involved and no one is monopolizing the class because the competition is deemed normal. Even so, the teachers have to become aware of this gap and find solutions, as this trend would be intensified more as the world becomes smaller ^[24].

Method Preferred by 21st century ESL students

The methods preferred by the 21st century ESL students are presented in narrative form. Students were asked to choose and explain how they prefer their English lessons to be taught. The finding revealed students prefer group work through Communicative Language Teaching where they can express their ideas openly with their group mates and work as a team while using the English language.

The participants expressed their feelings, views, aspirations, and reactions with regards to their preferred teaching method in their English class. The following answers surfaced after the focus group discussion.

The 21st century ESL students lean towards group work as a method that allows their English to be developed and enables them to express ideas and opinions as well. "Group work. If my one group mate speaks English, then I can go with the flow" (S4). "Maybe group work, so that while speaking English we can also apply it through communicating and exchanging thoughts with my group mates" (S37). "I choose group work to be fluent in English" (S41). "I like group work because we can share our ideas as a

group" (S39). "Group work, everyone will work and it depends on the person if he or she will work and everyone can express an opinion and interesting comrades of one another as classmates, everything is fine and good" (S1). "Group work because I can share my opinions with my group mates" (S33). "Group works because through this, I can exchange ideas with others" (S30). "Maybe group work, so that while speaking, we can also apply it through communicating and exchanging thoughts with my group mates" (S42). "Group work because it is easier because you can share your thoughts on the lesson with your classmates" (S36).

The 21st-century learners also stated how the group works to enable them to learn new things particularly on topics they have less knowledge about especially when they do "brainstorming". "It is easier to work with a group. You can do 'brainstorming'" (S40). "If I don't have enough knowledge, I can know if I don't know and we can decide on what to write ang true guin- trabaho gud namo." (If I don't have enough knowledge, I can ask and decide what to write and have our real output) (S5). "Brainstorming and shaping of ideas happen in group work" (S35). "Group work, it means maraming utak ang nandoon sa grupo kaya mas madali ang task." (Group work, it means more brains are working so the task is easier) (S9). "I like Group work, mas maraming utak mas maraming info, 'di palaging kalat or annoying, if mag participate lahat, you can gather more info. and get their idea." (I like group work because the more brains, the more information and the class is organized and not annoying, if everyone participates, you can gather more info. and get their idea) (S16). "Group work, because for me I prefer group work because the outcome of your output will be better because more brains are better than one" (S44).

The 21st-century students also prefer having group works as a way of socializing and having fun while learning as a team. "Group work, there are funny and happy moments" (S6). "Group work, I prefer group work because it teaches us how to socialize that I needed during English subject" (S45). "Group work because teamwork is a great exercise for us" (31). "I prefer group work because everybody is involved" (S32). "Group work because it can show your cooperation to one another" (S29). "Group work, this method helps us to interact more and share our ideas" (S38).

This means that 21st-century learners prefer to be taught using Communicative Language Teaching because they want to use English communicatively and practice the syntax in their daily life-promoting fluency as they share their ideas and opinions with confidence while socializing with their classmates. It also improves their comprehension and enhances their vocabulary. Furthermore, the statements hereby show that 21st-century students seemingly see the importance of using ESL especially in producing a better output. CLT's function in the learning process is helping the learners appreciate their goals and improve their communication skills ^[25]. Moreover, educators "do not always correct errors for their learners," to enable fluency in CLT. As Richards ^[26] supported that one of CLT's objective is to enhance the students' fluency in using language as teachers guide throughout the learning process. Also, language teaching is considered functional and fruitful students are vigorously involved in "authentic tasks" directed in a "natural and spontaneous" method ^[27]. CLT simply supports that language is learned for communication, because language is mainly used in talking ^[28].

Relationship of Variables

The significant relationship between the methods in teaching ESL and the academic performance of 21st century ESL students is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Significant Relationship between the Methods in Teaching ESL and Academic Performance of 21st century ESL Students

Variables	M	r-value	p-value	Decision
English as a Second Language Teaching Methods	4.20	0.614	0.013	Rejected
Academic Performance				

As disclosed in the table, ESL students obtained a mean of 85.15, while the teaching methods had a mean of 4.20. This resulted in an r-value of .614 and a p-value of 0.013. Since the p-value is lesser than .05, it means that the null hypothesis is rejected; hence it is concluded that there is sufficient evidence that the utilized teaching method seem to have a positive effect to the students' academic performance.

It seems that 21st-century ESL students exposed to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) yield better and consistent results. In terms of their class performance, it is clear that students exposed in CLT perform at above average, despite the class size and inadequacy of facilities. Students build a better understanding of the main concepts more effectively when they are engaged to solve problems during class activities ^[29].

Conclusions

After a thorough analysis of the findings obtained from the results of this study, it was concluded that teachers find Communicative Language Teaching effectively in managing a big class size and in engaging the 21st-century learners. Moreover, the students' preference for CLT allows them to practice the target language in a real-life context with linguistic competence, and perform better academically. The researchers suggest that teachers handling English subjects must see to it that 21st-century learners do not only comprehend their lessons or the new vocabulary being introduced but use them in the real-world context with ease and confidence following the syntax and semantics. Secondly, teachers are encouraged to fully utilize English as a medium of instruction and minimize the use of translation during class and be more creative in employing CLT. Also, the Department of Education, specifically the Human Resource and Training Development Division are encouraged to offer training and seminars related to ESL teaching to ensure quality instruction. Nevertheless, it is recommended that they conduct a similar study involving more participants with longer time duration to attest to the validity of the results presented in this study.

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Data Availability

All the data are presented in the study.

Statement of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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