# Methods of Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language: Nangarhar University Case Study

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**Abstract**

Arabic as a foreign language in Afghan context particularly of Nangarhar University, which is the largest public institution of higher learning has long history of teaching. The study discusses the methods of teaching Arabic as foreign language. The paper also examines the role of multimedia in enhancing the traditional methods (Chalk and Talk) of Arabic in Afghanistan. The study further explores the importance of Arabic language in Afghanistan. The paper is based on library research and the personal teaching experience of researcher. The study suggests some practical guidelines for both teachers and students of Arabic language. For instructor, it suggests ways for effective teaching and further introduced tips for learners to grasp the Arabic language quite faster. The paper also compares the implementation of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at the NU Department of Arabic. It is found that GTM and CLT under the eclectic approach should be used to help students in both accuracy and fluency.

**Key Words:** Arabic, Foreign Language, Effective Teaching, Multimedia, GTM, CLT, Nangarhar University

**Introduction**

There is no doubt that, the Arabic Language has an exceptional position in Islam (Hooker, 1999). Allah has chosen the Arabic Language as an effective medium of communication for His message. Arabic is not only a language per se, but a language has been chosen by Allah to communicate with His servants (Coffman, 1995). Allah says in the Quran: Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran in order that you may understand (Translated by Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali). In fact, Allah is directly telling us that learning Arabic is very crucial in understanding His message. Indeed, in order to understand the beauty of Al-Quran, the revelation by which Allah has sent down His Messages, one must put the learning of the Arabic Language as the first priority (Al-Quran).

In the context of Education, Afghanistan is one of the developing countries in the world. The new Afghan Government initiated a series of major educational reforms since 2001 in an attempt to develop Afghanistan into a regional educational hub. In Afghanistan, the constitution

guarantees the right of education to all its citizens without discrimination (Constitution of Afghanistan, 2004). The Afghanistan National Education System provides primary, secondary, tertiary and higher education (B.A. level) in public institutions free of cost with the purpose of creating a united and disciplined community (Afghan Ministry of Education 2017; Afghan Ministry of Higher Education, 2015). There has always been the importance of Arabic language in Afghanistan both religiously and politically. Afghanistan as a pure Muslim country needs the importance Arabic language in order to do the daily religious rituals. In this connection, one can find several of Madrassas and other Islamic schools in every province, city, district and village of Afghanistan. Besides this, Arabic language as a medium of communication with Arabic communities also has its own prestige. Therefore, Arabic is taught as a foreign language in the Education and Higher Education system of Afghanistan. For, Nangarhar University established a well-qualified Department of Arabic Language and Literature within the framework of Faculty of Languages and Literature in 1992.

 In terms of teaching methodology, Arabic language was usually taught by traditional (lecturer Method, Grammar Translation Method) and is still taught the same way in some of the secondary schools and local Madrassas in Afghanistan, and this makes the learning process boring and tedious. Using technology and multimedia not only motivates learners, but it also enhances their performance in the classroom. Study indicated that using state of the art technology significantly improves the capability of students in acquiring knowledge and helps them to continue learning (Morgil et.al, 2005). Therefore, teaching through Communicative Language Teaching is a new trend recently initiated for language teaching in Afghan universities.

## Review of Literature

Study claims that, Arabic Language can be mastered more meaningfully if instructors utilize sounds, patterns, gestures, symbols and blend multimedia in everyday lessons. (Wikipedia, 2006). In addition, computer mediated teaching methods not only provide opportunities for the teachers to prepare excellent instructions, but it also paves the way for more challenging and more meaningful learning environments (Aydin, 2005). Learning and teaching do not happen in isolation. It involves learning plan and student- instructor collaboration. If teachers introduce plan-oriented learning models to their students, it motivates them and helps them to continue learning. (Kat E., 2005). Successful teaching and effective learning occurs when instructors use creativity and effective strategies based on group work and cooperative learning (Neo, M. 2005). Another study shows that, in order for students to gain knowledge, instructors must create a meaningful and technology-mediated learning environment (Gemino, 2006).

Further studies report that an objective-oriented instructor promotes critical thinking in the classroom to achieve results (Kiger, 2003). He or she must engage learners as a precondition to provide an effective learning environment in the classroom. Trainers must foster learner-to-learner interaction modules for meaningful learning outcomes. Teachers should promote the role of engagement in the classroom by constantly praising students for their achievements (Beder

et.al, 2006). Besides this, GTM as a classical method for teaching foreign language, which is the most dominated method of teaching is used to develop the grammatical or linguistic competence of students while CLT is as student centered teaching approach is used to develop the communicative competence of learners (Richards, 2006). The concept of economic growth and global village also needs student-centered approaches and methods of teaching to gain the knowledge of language for effective communication.

## Methodology

The study is based on library and the personal experiences carried out so far from the researcher personal teaching experience at the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Nangarhar University. In terms of library, the study is the product of rich readings in terms of language, linguistics especially sociolinguistics, various methods of foreign language teaching especially the Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching. The study made a comparative analysis of both the Grammar translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching for effective Arabic language teaching in the context of Afghanistan.

## Findings

### The Process of Effective Learning and Effective Teaching

There are number of principles and guidelines one has to review before initiating steps towards effective learning and teaching (Faryadi, 2007). They are summarized as in the below table.

| Teacher | Student |
| --- | --- |
| Planning and strategies | Group work and pair and peed work |
| Methodology | Attitude and perception |
| Preparation | Critical thinking |
| Presentation | Willingness to learn |
| Promote thinking skills | Cooperative learning |
| Technology integration | Goals oriented |
| Satisfaction | State of mind |
| Motivation | Self-regulated |
| Result | Reason application |
| Evaluation | Accountability |

*Table No. 1 (Characteristic Features of Learning and Teaching Process)*

According to Hativa and Lesgold (1996), "Learning does not occur in vacuum". In fact learning can be affected by a variety of factors. Such factors include student's behavior, teacher's behavior, student's point of view, student-to-student interaction, social atmosphere, classroom management, learning materials and the learning environment. (Hativa & Lesgold, 1996). Therefore, Faryadi (2007) listed the following factors on the part of teacher and student affecting the learning outcome.

| Factors Affecting the Learning Outcome | |
|---|---|
| Student's attitude | Teacher's attitude |
| Learning environment | Social environment |
| Student's interaction | Classroom management |
| Learning instruction | Student-teacher interaction |

*Table No.2 (Factors Affecting the Learning Outcome)*

**Methods of Teaching Arabic as FL at Nangarhar University**

Experts have confirmed that, teachers should promote critical thinking and problem solving skills in the class, rather than forcing students to memorize mere facts. By feeding too many facts into the students' memories, they can find only a limited amount of time to understand the subject (Lurjan. et.al, 2006). Traditionally speaking, teachers often lectured behind closed doors, shying away from the blessing of multimedia (Richard E. 1992). The role of the teacher in a traditional setting is to give orders and to ask the students to follow him or her in bitter silence. Therefore, it can be stated that the most dominated method at the Department of Arbic is GTM but with the increasing emergence of computers and interactive multimedia learning, teacher-centered learning is slowly but surely, fading in order to give way to a more meaningful learning environment. Nowadays there is shift observed from GTM to CLT in order to teach the students a more interactive Arabic language at Nangarhar University. Here it is important to compare the principles of both GTM and CLT. Freeman (2008) listed the principles of GTM and CLT as follow.

| Methods of Teaching Arabic as FL at Nangarhar University | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Principles** | **GTM** | **CLT** |
| Characteristic of Teaching Learning Process. | 1. Students are taught to translate<br>2. Students learn grammar deductively.<br>3. Learners memorize | 1. Everything is mostly done with communicative intent.<br>2. Students use the language through communicative activities such as game and role plays. |

|  | | |
|---|---|---|
|  | native language equivalents for the target language vocabulary | 3. Communication is purposeful.<br>4. Using authentic materials.<br>5. Activities are often carried out by students in small group.<br>6. Grammar is taught inductively. |
| Nature of Interaction | 1. There is no principle related to this area. | 1. Motivate the students.<br>2. Teacher gives the opportunity to the students to express their individuality.<br>3. Students' security is enhanced by cooperative interaction |
| The Role of Native Language of Students. | 1. The meaning of the target language is made clear by translating into the learners' native language.<br>2. The native language is mostly used in teaching learning process. | 1. Students' native language is permitted.<br>2. Most of the activities are explained by using target language and native language only for certain thing. |
| The Role of Native Language of Students. | 1. The meaning of the target language is made clear by translating into the learners' native language.<br>2. The native language is mostly used in teaching learning process. | 1. Students' native language is permitted.<br>2. Most of the activities are explained by using target language and native language only for certain thing. |
| The Language Skills that are Emphasized. | 1. Vocabulary and grammar are emphasized.<br>2. Reading and writing are the primary skills. | 1. The functions are reintroduced and the more complex forms are learned.<br>2. Students work on all four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) from the beginning. |
| The Way of Teachers' Response to Students' Error. | 1. Correct answer is extremely significant.<br>2. If students make an error the teacher will supply them with the correct answer. | 1. Error of form is tolerated during the fluency-based activities.<br>2. The teacher may note the learners' error and return to the learners with accuracy-based activities. |

*Table No.3: The Principles of GTM and CLT*

The practical and personal experience of the researcher finds that choosing one approach doesn't help students effectively acquire Arabic language in Afghan context. Because observing the principles of both GTM and CLT, it can be concluded that GTM pays more attention to language accuracy while CLT focuses on fluency. However, in language learning, both accuracy and

fluency plays a vital role. Therefore, both GTM and CLT under eclectic approach can be a better prescription.

**Conclusion**

Instructors should bear in mind that learning occurs when students are motivated (John E. Barbuto & Jr. 2006). Students must be given the choice to learn cooperatively and at the same time they must be encouraged to participate in class activities without fear and humiliation (Bruner, 1996). Furthermore, instructors must integrate technology to aid them while teaching their lessons in order to achieve effective and creative ways of knowledge transfer. Learners should be persuaded to use critical thinking and reasoning in the classrooms to help improve their learning skills (Izzo et.al, 2006). The job of the teacher in the classroom is to promote the concept of cooperation among the learners and to be helpful towards each other. GTM as a classical method is mostly employed at the Department of Arabic in Nangarhar University. However, CLT as a student-centric approach is a new trend in this department for teaching Arabic in the sense of effective communication. The practical and personal experience of the researcher finds that choosing one approach doesn't help students effectively acquire Arabic language in Afghan context. Because observing the principles of both GTM and CLT, it can be concluded that GTM pays more attention to language accuracy while CLT focuses on fluency. However, in language learning, both accuracy and fluency plays a vital role. Therefore, both GTM and CLT under eclectic approach can be a better prescription.

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