A Critical Study of Iranian EFL Environment

Arezoo Molavi Vardanjani
Islamic Azad University
Omidiyeh branch
Iran

Abstract
This paper discusses the theoretical and pedagogical issues in EFL learning and instruction to explore the research problem ‘the EFL teaching deficiencies in Iranian classrooms’. The primary aim of this study is to provide a solid overview of the second language teaching methods and approaches in the context of English as a foreign language in Iran. The theoretical issues discussed include research on the nature of the two commonly used Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching approaches (CLT), the methodology and strategies employed in Iranian EFL classrooms and evaluating the students’ achievement from the point of view of language teachers and learners. To fulfill the aims of the study, a modified version of a BALLI questionnaire was employed. Results show that in spite of its deficiencies, both teachers and students still prefer to use the traditional GTM.

Key Words: EFL environment, Behaviorism, Communicative Language Teaching, Iranian EFL classrooms

Suggested Citation:
1. Introduction
As Razmjoo & Riazi (2006) put it, teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task in developing countries in general and in our country in particular. Forty years ago, the assumption was that teaching English was a politically neutral activity and acquiring it would lead to educational and economic empowerment. Today this picture has changed more or less. Now that English is the language of globalization, international communication, commerce and trade, media and culture, different motivations for learning it come into play.

English has been included in the curriculum of Iranian schools and universities as well, and considerable attention has been paid to it in the last decades. However, despite the universal promotion of language learning facilities and growing interests in learning English as a foreign language in Iran, there is a common belief that English proficiency among Iranian junior university students is, on the average, far below that of expected of academic senior high school students after years of studying English in either intermediate or high schools where ‘they have had it as a compulsory course in schools from the age of 12 and will continue the English course until the age of 18 at secondary level. Surprisingly, after 7 years studying English, their ability to make small conversation in English is shaky’ (Jahangard, 2007:30).

Bakshii (1991) says that student’s knowledge of English at graduation time is not more than kind of a superficial understanding of some L2 vocabulary meaning and few simple sentences. Likewise, Jalilifar (2010) believes that our students at the college level seem rarely proficient enough to read and comprehend English language texts due to which many of them lose their interest in learning English and this phenomenon could lead to their failure in academic English courses. However, Kariminia & Salehi zade (2007) claim that some of the students, who pass the university entrance exams, do not even know the basics of the language while some of them know absolutely nothing, and that teaching them resembles waking the dead! This is what jin yi Xu (2003) calls the serious problem and has led to a teaching dilemma for teachers. There are college teachers who are worried about the deteriorating English ability among their students and who attribute the phenomenon to insufficient exposure to English input during their senior high school days (Ruixue, 2012; Mourtaga, 2010). Others attribute the phenomenon to overly easy English entrance exams. Some researchers believe that there must be something wrong with our current English educational system, or maybe some language barriers which are impeding our students’ learning and acquisition and many more suppositions, we can say with no certainty that, are grown out of reality or fallacy. Therefore, this seems to be a very interesting and also a serious question for us teachers to speculate about. In this regard, the present paper probes the problem of Iranian EFL environment from the point of view of language teachers and learners and aims to provide some pedagogical insights to help my colleagues in varied kinds of decisions they need to make in their daily class routine.

2. Literature review
The initial stages of taking purposeful measures in the field of L2 teaching fall completely short of any theoretical ideal. The twentieth century has seen the rise and fall of a variety
of methods and approaches from the Series Method (Gouin, 1880) to the Audio-Lingual Method (Fries, 1945), the Designer Methods (Brown, 2001), and later Communicative Language Teaching (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Wilkins, 1976). In regard to the dissatisfaction with the concept of method, it is clear that some approaches and methods are unlikely to be widely adopted. The reason is that maybe they are difficult to understand and use, lack practical application, require special training, and necessitate changes in teachers’ practices and beliefs (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 247). The Iranian educational system also poses no exception.

3. Historical Background of English Education in Iran

EFL teachers in Iran have used a variety of approaches, methods and techniques at different times. That is why one could not draw a clear-cut line to distinguish periods during which a specific teaching method was applied. Although a certain method might widely be used during a specific period of time, some features and techniques of other teaching methods could also be observed at the same time. Rahimi (1996) demonstrates that Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) was used in 1950’s all over the country. Saadat (1995) points out that in 1960’s Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) was put into practice in English language classes in Iran, similar to those of other countries. Both Saadat (1995) and Rahimi (1996) claim that GTM was used in most of the English classes in Iran. According to Musavi (2001) teaching English in Iranian high schools was more grammar based and teachers put more stress on teaching grammar rather than teaching reading comprehension and communicative skills. Correspondingly, Norozi Khiyabani believes that the structural and grammar-translation methods of teaching are already most common in Iran, and change is resisted (cited in Razmjo & Riazi, 2006). Following these, the present study aims to characterize the usual language teaching methods applied in Iran and to discuss the role and use of each of them in EFL environment in brief.

3.1 Grammar Translation

Grammar translation method known as "GTM" is the method in which nearly all phases of the lesson employ the use of students’ L1 and translation techniques. As Celce-Murcia (1991) believes, in GTM there is little use of the target language and instruction is given in the native language of the students (p. 6). The instruction is generally structural and the pedagogical focus is, consequently, on the grammatical features of English (Hadavi zade, Temizel, 2010).

In addition, the process of evaluation occurred when students could translate the readings to the first language and if they knew enough to translate especially selected and prepared exercises from the first to the second language (Chastain, 1988, p. 87). It seems that this method has had strong popularity among EFL learners around the world. Yet there are some negative points counted for it. First, researchers in linguistics have proved that to speak any language, whether native or foreign, entirely by rule is quite impossible. The persons who have learned a foreign or second language through this method find it difficult to give up the habit of first thinking in their first language and then translating their ideas into the second language. Therefore, failing to become proficient in
the second language, at a level near that of the first language, is the main problem in Iranian schools.

Second, in this method, instead of presenting through the texts of second language, emphasis is given on learning grammatical rules and vocabulary is organized at bilingual lists which should be memorized. GTM places emphasis on reading and writing, while neglecting speech (Rahimi and Sahragard, 2008). It has been observed that in a class, in which English is taught through this method, learners listen to the first language more than that to the second/foreign language. Since language learning involves habit formation such students fail to acquire a habit of speaking English (Krashen & Terrell, 1983:130).

Third, as there is dominance of GTM, group learning is the most neglected activities in Iranian foreign language classrooms. Students have been taught individually throughout their educational life and they are not accustomed to group norms. This problem may not have a significant effect in learning other subjects.

Despite all those mentioned disadvantages, as Krashen & Terrel (1983) believe, by applying GTM, the best results will be achieved in written exams where learners are able to spend more time answering the questions by referring to their grammatical knowledge which roles have been emphasized by their teachers. Besides, most of Iranian expert teachers and instructors confirm that GTM is their common teaching approach (Khodamoradi, 1997).

### 3.2 Behaviorism and the Audio-Linguual Method

This approach to language learning advised learners to be taught a language directly, without using the students’ native language to explain new words/grammar in the target language. However, the audio-lingual method (ALM) didn’t focus on teaching vocabulary, nor tried to teach grammatical rules directly. In fact, they made a bid to achieve the accurate sentences via abstract approach and more practices (Harmer, 2001). The main hypothesis of this method is based on behaviorist theory, that learning second language could be trained through a system of reinforcement (Butzkamm& Caldwell, 2009). Therefore, language learning involves habit formation and learning a habit will be created by persuading student to do it, and correct use of a trait would receive positive feedback while incorrect use of that would receive negative feedback.

The students’ native language has had a variety of functions nearly in all teaching methods except in Direct Method and Audiolinguialism. Those methods had their theoretical underpinnings in “structuralism” and assumed language learning to be a process of habit formation, without considering the students’ background knowledge and their linguistic abilities in their L1. In addition, no attention was given to humanistic views of teaching (Bagheri, 1994). Rahimi (1996: 9) mentioned that ALM was not successful in Iranian English classes because of the factors like shortage of qualified teachers, teaching aids, time, etc.

Although the audio-lingual method is said to have produced very productive students, not all the set patterns meet the needs and interests of learners, and therefore a large part of pattern practice seem hollow and even useless. They can easily slip away from memory and thus it is not as effective as it sounds (Jin yi Xu, 2003).
3.3 Communicative Language Teaching
The communicative approach, mostly referred to as CLT has an extensive definition that covers a large range of needs and demands. For instance, it varies depending on the age and needs of learners. This approach, through which judicious use of the students’ native language is permitted in communicative language teaching (Larsen, Freeman, 2000, p.132), has survived into the new era of language teaching methodologies because of its referring to a diverse set of principles that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures and several contemporary teaching approaches such as content-based instruction, cooperative language learning, and task-based instruction can all claim to be applications of them. Many CLT teachers maintain that the best way for learners to achieve native like control of the target language is to think in that language rather than to translate or reprocess the target language into their mother tongue. According to Brown (2000: 29), communicative goals are best achieved by giving attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and to the students’ eventual need to apply classroom learning to unrehearsed contexts in the real world.
CLT supporters have always claimed that the exposure to the target language solves the problem and that’s the best way to learn a second/foreign language. However, there are lots of linguists and teachers thinking otherwise. They believe that without a firm knowledge of grammar in the target language, learners cannot produce meaningful sentences. Besides, free reading, without teacher’s intervention and feedback, doesn’t produce competent English users and indispensable asset for English proficiency without which learners possess nothing more than a selection of everyday phrases adequate for basic greetings and so on. But these will be deficient when learners are required to perform any kind of sophisticated linguistic task (Brown, 2000).
In spite of the negative aspects, it seems that the non-grammar approach has gained growth worldwide and CLT came into the mainstream in EFL teaching methodologies. Considering the above facts, it seems that teacher training programs were unsuccessful in helping Iranian teachers to change their previous methodology. The adopted methodology today is believed to be eclectic and focuses on communicative approaches to language teaching. Yet, because of teachers’ practices in the classroom, it is more likely a grammar translation method (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). Therefore, the present study investigates the foreign language teaching deficiencies and foreign language methodology deficiencies in Iranian classrooms. Using separate questionnaires, designed for language teachers and learners, the paper strives to find answer to the following questions:
Concerning teachers:
A1. What is the teachers’ general evaluation of the students’ English ability?
A2. What do the teachers think about the students’ difficulties in the four language skills?
A3. What are the major causes of the students’ learning difficulties?
A4. What are the methods that the teachers use in teaching English?
Concerning students:
B1. What is the students’ self-evaluation of their English ability?
B2. What are the students' learning difficulties regarding the four language skills?
B3. Which strategies do the students prefer in learning English?

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants
This research investigated the language attitudes and motivations of university students enrolled in general English courses at IAUO, Iran. The subjects were the students majoring in various engineering disciplines during the academic year of 2012. From the accessible the population, a convenient sample of 150 Iranian university students responded to the items of the BALLI. The reason for selecting these students was based on availability and also because the participants in the study were the researcher's students for 2 consecutive semesters and she had adequate information about their language background.

Moreover, all of the 8 accessible English teachers, who teach both general and technical English courses as lecturers at IAUO, were asked to take part in the study. In terms of teaching experience, two teachers have been teaching for more than 15 years and others have experience of at least 10 years and all of them had M.A. degrees in Teaching English language/English literature.

4.2 Instruments
To conduct this study two sets of questionnaires, for the students and for the teachers, were employed in line with the objectives of the study. Not many, directly related, studies have been made in this very aspect. Therefore, the researcher made use of a previous version of Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), ESL student version (Horwitz, 1987), modified it so that it matches the cultural and pedagogical backgrounds in Iran, and can be useful for the present research.

The first questionnaire aimed to explore the university teachers’ teaching approaches, their viewpoints about the students’ ability and their learning difficulties to see how the educational system and the teachers can help students.

In the second questionnaire, the students were asked to answer some general questions about their genders, majors, length of English learning and their academic marks. Then, they were asked to answer questions regarding how they learn English and what their learning difficulties are. In addition, they were also asked to answer what approaches they felt useful for them and their expectations about learning English.

4.3 Procedures
Students were asked to fill out the forms within 45 minutes in the class. There are six hundred and eighty engineering students in total in the target university. Four classes were randomly selected to represent the four different engineering departments in the university. The one hundred and fifty subjects were required to answer the 35-items questionnaire designed in two five scale Likert and writing parts in the classroom.

The teacher questionnaire was conducted via email. They answered the questionnaires and sent back the files to the researcher as soon as they had finished the task. The Time parameter wasn’t regarded important in this research. All the eight English teachers gave back the answered questionnaires.
4.4 Results
The data in the study were collected from the teachers and the students and are analyzed in the following section. Each research question is answered according to the result and discussed thoroughly.

4.4.1 Results Based on Teachers’ Perception

**Question A1: What is the teachers’ evaluation of the students’ English ability?**
The teachers’ responses to this indicate their view about the general English proficiency of the students in IAUO. No teachers consider the students’ English ability to be good (0%). More than half of the teachers think the students’ ability is not good that is identified by the scale 5-4 in the questionnaire (56%). About one third of the teachers think that their ability is average that equals to scale 3-2 (31%). Two teachers indicated that students’ English ability is extremely good or bad indicated by scales 5 and 1 in the questionnaire (13%). Generally speaking, in the teachers’ perspective, the students’ English ability is not very good. Results are illustrated in the figure 1.

**Question A2: What do the teachers think about the students’ difficulties in the four language aspects?**
According to the teachers’ responses, the students have more problems in writing (40.91%) and speaking (31.27%) English. In comparison, the teachers think the students have fewer difficulties in listening (18.18%) and reading (9.64%) to English as illustrated in the figure 2.

**Question A3. What are the major causes of the students’ learning difficulties?**
Based on teachers’ responses, figure 3 shows that students’ poor English ability is mostly due to (1) a bad foundation (45%), (2) improper ways of learning (35%) and (3) weak motivation (17%). These three reasons make up 97% of their difficulties, and are related to the students’ personal pedagogic factors. In particular, the students’ poor foundation makes up the highest percentage. This shows that university students are generally troubled by their shallow foundation.

In addition, all of the teachers agree that their little contact with English native speakers is another crucial factor. Only 3% of the teachers think that the students’ learning difficulties are due to their family background, low IQ or improper ways of teaching. This means that factors such as family, IQ, or the school is not a decisive factor. The biggest challenge for the teachers is that the students’ personal unpredagogic factors such as a poor foundation and weak motivation may interfere with their English learning. The teachers have to make
more efforts trying to reinforce their foundation, raise their motivation, and correct their improper ways of learning.

![Figure 3: Causes of students' learning difficulties](image1.png)

![Figure 4: Various approaches teachers tend to use in classroom](image2.png)

**Question A4: What methods do the teachers use?**
The teachers seem to prefer the traditional ways of teaching. Half of the teachers, participated in the study, explain the main idea of reading materials in Persian (44%); 26% of the teachers translate the texts into Persian word by word. These two approaches are more traditional in comparison with the others. They together constitute 70% of the teaching approaches the teachers use. The reason why the teachers adopt the traditional methods seems to be that the students are used to the teacher-centered style and sometimes teachers have no choice but to satisfy the students’ demands.

In addition, the teachers implement some interactive activities in the classrooms. They make use of group discussions (15%), have the students search for relevant information on the Net (4%), and have the students do role-play activities (7%). Not many teachers would interact with the students on the Net (1%). These approaches related to interactive activities constitute 27% of the regular classroom time. This shows that doing interactive activities in universities is not that common.

The teachers also use peer assistance (1%). Less than one-tenth of the teachers have their students practice explaining the contents (2%). Sometimes students have problems but they dare not ask their teachers. Using peer assistance can relieve students’ fear of teachers. Having students stand on the stage to lecture can accelerate their progress. Not a single teacher explains the texts totally in English. This means that using English completely is not common or not popular among the teachers. Look at figure 4 to follow the results.

**4.4.2 Results Based on Students’ Perception**

**Question B1: What is the students’ self-evaluation of their English abilities?**
According to the students’ responses to this question, 44% of the students think their English ability is so-so. There are 34% of the students who think their English is average, but can be improved. About one-fifth of the students consider their English to be very poor (21%); only two students think their English is very good (1%).
Generally speaking, the students think their English is not very good but they expect to improve their English ability. Both the teachers and the students share a common view about the students’ English ability. Figure 5 illustrates the results.

![Pie charts](image)

**Figure 5. students’ self-evaluation of their English ability**

**Figure 6. students’ self-evaluation regarding their four skills**

**Question B2: What are the students’ learning difficulties regarding the four language skills?**

As demonstrated in figure 6, the students think their reading skill is the best (40%). The other three skills, listening, speaking, and writing make up 20%, 26% and 14%, respectively. The reading skill gets a much higher evaluation than the other three ones. This means that the students think their listening, speaking, and writing skills need improving.

According to the students’ responses, the students think they have the greatest difficulty in writing English and also have problems in their listening and speaking skills. On the other hand, they are quite confident about their reading ability. This shows that these three skills, besides reading, are their major problems. Grammar and vocabulary are crucial for the four language skills. The two items which together constitute 53% of their problems pose a big problem for university students because the two factors are the most fundamental elements in learning English. Teachers should focus more on grammatical explanation and expanding their lexicon.

**Question B3: What strategies do the students prefer in learning English?**

Figure 7 represents that the students prefer the traditional way of teaching: the teacher can explain grammatical rules by means of deduction (27%) and translate the texts into Persian word by word (39%). They want their teachers to remind them of every grammatical rule. They seem to have got used to the method and this may compensate for their poor grammatical foundation. Another point is that they aim to be prepared for their major goal that is by all means to get over the University Entrance Exam (UEE). Likewise, 28% of the students adopt the teacher-centered teaching methods. Both the teachers and the students prefer the traditional method, which seems to be the most acceptable approach in the classroom. Using the language lab (18%) is also one of the students’ preferred activities that include English media to learn English.

Group discussion (10%) is also popular among the students. In comparison with the teachers’ survey, 15% of the teachers include group discussion in the class. There is one thing worth mentioning. Only 6% of the students like their teachers to give many exams or
to ask them to answer questions in the class. They may feel shy or embarrassed if they
don’t know the answer.

**Figure: 7 Strategies the students most prefer**

To sum up, the specific viewpoints of both EFL teachers and learners of the study are
reviewed here. From the teachers’ point of view, teaching university students is
frustrating. The traditional teacher-centered method is the most acceptable for the students.
Grammatical explanation and lexical translation of the texts are the two mostly demanded
and applied teaching strategies in the classroom.

From the viewpoint of the students, every phenomenon in language must come to
grammar for its final judgment. Most of them are ‘rule-ridden’ while they are learning
English in the classroom. It’s no wonder they are better at grammar-based tests. For them,
passing on knowledge is one of the basic professional obligations of a teacher, and
learning English means listening to a teacher’s lecture, explanation, and translation. They
believe that learners’ English proficiency is built on the teacher’s lectures rather than on
their own practice. They also use L1 permanently within the classroom. This has been a
traditional way of learning for most people as Jin yi Xu (2003) claims.

5. Discussion

The paper attempted to offer an overview of the Iranian EFL classrooms based on the
teachers’ and students’ individual responses. However, the two teaching and learning
problems seem to be, somehow, interwoven, since the class achievement needs the
interaction of both teachers and students in all learning activities. In the following
sections, the main results of the study are discussed critically under the following
headlines as the recognized EFL teaching and learning problems:

5.1 Teacher-Centeredness

One interesting point in the findings of the research questions A4, B3 denotes both
teachers and students prefer to apply more teacher-centered approach that is a component
of most traditional methodologies, in spite of the fact that present day classrooms need to
be more student-oriented, activity-based and demanding in practice. Besides, they require
teachers to be more responsive, spontaneous and critical to create and maintain a
classroom environment serving the learners’ needs (Newton, 2002, as cited in Nasir &
Abdul Majid Khan, 2006).

So, it is time for Iranian EFL environment to shift toward more interactive approaches.
The case is not to simply choose between GTM and CLT, but to apply more task-
integrated approaches. Cazden (2001) claimed that the previous pattern of classroom
discourse has been the default pattern or the unmarked one which seems to be natural at least to some teachers (p. 53). In this pattern the learners are often limited to a responding role with only one chance of speaking and there may be few opportunities for learners to practice communicative strategies (Jia, 2005). Cazden (2001) also raised the awareness of more marked, non-default patterns of teacher-student interaction which reflect differences in educational purposes for talk; number of participants; medium of interaction (electronic mail instead of oral); and cultural differences among students.

5.2 L1 Use in Classroom

It seems that Iranian EFL learners find it difficult to communicate freely in the target language after seven years they have been taught English in schools and university, as the results of responses to research questions A2, B2 shows the students’ weakness in listening and speaking activities, and questions B2, B3 that denote the preferences of both teachers and students in using L1 and translation during class.

A lot of research projects have been conducted to see whether EFL teachers should use their students’ first language or allow them to do so and to what extent. One common belief held among the opponents of L1 use is that L2 learners often have little or no exposure to the target language outside the classroom. It follows, therefore, that teachers should not spend this valuable classroom time using L1. The second important argument that led translation to have bad name was the fear of interference errors (Haltai, 1989: 288). The argument is that translation fosters a sense of false equivalence between the two languages resulting in the inter-language errors (Cook 2002). Gowers and Walters (1983) in their ‘Teaching Practice Handbook’, for example, clearly describe the dangers of translation in encouraging structural or lexical equivalences.

5.3 UEE Dominancy

The success of any action usually depends on the extent to which individuals strive to attain their purpose, along with their desire to do so. According to Gardner, learning will not be accessible without motivational factors (Gardner and Lambert, 1959 cited in Dornyei, 2001; p49). Hadavi zade claims the most significant factors of not being motivated in learning a second language among Iranian learners is that there is no eagerness, enthusiasm and desire toward learning a second language. The majority of the participants agreed that there is no need and necessity of learning another language in Iranian society. The emphasis on university entrance exams (UEE) has always outweighed other reasons that require communicative skills (Hadavi Zade, 2010). This is disproved here by the responses of the research participants to the questions A2, A4, B2 and B3, and is also in line with Ghorbani (2008) who stated that Iranian high school teachers generally and pre-university teachers specially think that they should prepare the students for acceptance in the university entrance exam by having them to translate English to Persian texts. He added that the common method of teaching in schools is GTM, and they try to improve the skills such as reading at the sacrifice of listening, speaking, and writing (Ghorbani, 2008, cited in Jafari Laasaki, 2010).

Similarly, Jahangard (2007) reported that the teachers give fewer minds to oral drills like listening and speaking abilities in the classrooms, and they more emphasize reading,
writing, grammar, and vocabulary. The only concern is to make students pass tests and exams since productive skills are not tested in the UEE (Jafari Laasaki, 2010). And maybe the same purpose forces university students to prepare for higher education EEs.

5. 4 Textbooks and materials

Language development must occur in the context of social interaction which doesn’t exist in Iranian EFL context. Wei (2007) called EFL environments as input-poor environments and suggested that in such environment vocabulary knowledge, to be of real use, must be integrated into discourse. Since learning words individually doesn’t necessarily take care of other aspects of communication competence, English textbooks can play a crucial role in this regard. Therefore, teachers should be more sensitive in selecting proper textbooks and reference materials to reinforce the students’ four linguistic skills.

Studies show that basic language skills are generally taught in isolation in a very rigid order in our country’s schools. However, it has been recognized that we generally use more than one skill at a time, leading to more integrated exercises. However, most English textbooks in our country lack enough integrated exercises. For instance, speaking is a skill that often is underrepresented in our country’s traditional classrooms. This could be due to the fact that it is considered a less-academic skill than writing. It is transient and improvised and unfortunately, when modeling a dialogue sentence for students to repeat, the teacher not only gives an oral L1 equivalent for unknown words or phrases, but repeats the foreign language phrase before students imitate it (Hesani, 2001, Karami & Salehizadeh, 2007)

In a related study, Razmjoo (2007) evaluates and compares the degree of fulfillment of communicative language teaching principles of high-school and private school textbooks, and draws several important conclusions. He asserts that on the basis of the results and findings of the study “CLT principles are not utilized in the Iranian high school textbooks”. He further emphasizes that high school textbooks, which are “reading and grammar based”, do not fit EFL communicative teaching and therefore do not meet language learners’ communicative needs (Razmjoo, 2007, p. 12). Finally, grammar teaching methods in our country’s textbooks are based on paternal practices and comparative approach which lack dynamics and decrease language learners’ motivation (Bakhshi, 1994).

6. Conclusion

What is the most effective teaching methodology has always been the topic of research for language teachers. When structural approach considered being responsible for the incompetence in communicative use of English, the teaching path led to communicative approach, with the former almost discarded. Iranian EFL environment also experienced such a conflict to decide whether the GTM best suits its educational planning or the CLT, and in the long lasting remits, it has hesitatingly taken some characteristics and strategies of both the structural and communicative one, despite the growing pain in the neck that bothers not only language learners but also teachers.

In contrast to all the previous challenges to choose between the two, one can find out these two as not actually two opposing extremes, but two ends on a spectrum, ranged over by
various values, situations, demands, approaches and strategies that requires teachers to use
creative ideas and materials to make the best of the present input poor condition ruling
over our EFL environment. We need more in-service educational workshops for language
teachers to share ideas, see and learn from colleagues’ experiences, and update their
knowledge and move toward more integrative, interactional and activity based approaches.
Therefore, more research projects are required to get conducted on how integrated skilled
approaches would work in Iranian EFL society. According to Dornyei (2007, p. 730) “as
long as we are aware of the vast repertoire of techniques that are at our disposal, it is up to
us to choose the specific ones that we will apply, based on the specific needs that arise in
our concrete circumstances”.

About the Author:
Arezoo Molavi Vardanjani hold Master’s degree in linguistics and serves as a faculty
member in the Islamic Azad University, Omidiyeh branch, Iran. The author’s teaching
and research interests include- ELT, TEFL, Linguistics and Applied Linguistics.
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