
Assessment of Active Learning Methods in Linguistic Courses: Ambo University in Focus, Ethiopia

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Abstract: This study attempts to explore learning style in Linguistic courses in which learners respond to and use different kinds of stimuli in their learning. Unlike other discipline, in linguistics learning is a development process in which learners use their existing knowledge to make sense of the flow of new information. The objectives of this study were Investigate both students' and teachers' feelings towards active learning methods, explore factors that hinder the application of ALMs in Language classes, identify the prevalent practices, opportunities and threats of ALMs Language classes, and seek remedial solutions for the identified problems in linguistics courses. The research design of this study was qualitative and quantitative. To collect the important information for the research the researcher was used the instruments such as questionnaire, and systematic observation. To mention some the findings most of the instructors used different active learning methods specially group discussion, class discussion, and presentation to deliver their lesson in linguistic courses. In addition, there are teachers who used Bus Stop, Gallery, Individual work and Gold Fish Bowl methods in addition to the above four stated methods of teaching to deliver their lesson as needed. Lack of willingness and commitment from teachers and students, Most students' negative attitude towards ALMs, Large class size, Lack of resources and facilities, Students' poor academic background, and the influence of old method of teaching. The university should prepare different workshop to develop the knowledge of teachers and students on ALMs in general and linguistic courses in particular.

Keywords: Active Learning Methods, Education, Linguistic

1. Introduction

For the enhancement of effective teaching, there are numerous things to be fulfilled. Among these method of teaching is the vital one. For teacher of every subject, method is important. For an effective teaching of any subject the method has to be as good as the content. It is through effective method only that it is possible to make a subject interesting and useful. Without a method, teaching would be hard. The arrangement of subject and its presentation is very important for successful teaching.

Method of teaching differs from stage to stage and from group to group. The method to be adopted depends up on many factors which include the environment and the familiar situations or experiences that are to be correlated effectively. While teaching a set of pupils with varying interests and aptitudes, one has to be aware of the psychological basis of teaching learning process.

The term method can be thought of as the most effective and economic way of learning to take place among students. Communication of ideas & development of concept in a precise manner based on a logical development of subject is important prerequisite in teaching a subject.

Teaching is thus the most difficult task and every body is not fit to be a teacher. Some persons may have 'flair' for teaching and such persons have the ability to awaken interest and arrest the attention of the students. Some others who are not so fortunate can improve their teaching through practice if they are fully acquainted with various methods of teaching. In order to make the children learn more effectively the teacher has to adopt the right method of teaching. For choosing the right methods for a given situation, the teacher must be familiar with different methods of teaching.

So many scholars approved as active learning method is better than traditional one. Among these study on science teaching to compare the effects of problem based active

learning and traditional lecturing on grade of students. The findings show that using problem based on active learning had a positive effect on students' academic achievement and a positive attitude to the science courses [13].

The other point ought to be raised under effective teaching is creating positive classroom environment. Classroom environment includes the physical environment and classroom rules and procedures. A well-organized classroom improves in instruction, learning, classroom management and diminishes the challenging behavior of students. Environment includes such things as schedules and rules, room arrangement for instruction and materials management, students eating arrangement, plans for transitions between activities and settings [19].

The other point discuss is that the classroom should be arrange to maximize the teacher's ability to monitor students, decrease noise and disruption, increase students' on talk behavior, minimize distractions, encourage students to talk with each other and the teacher, and allow students easy access to materials [19].

The other phenomenon in touch is that classroom management. He strongly agrees that classroom management is a concern of teachers who are new to the profession or the grade level. As he tries to point out, many effective teachers have mastered classroom management. Even though there are a variety of classroom management systems are valuable, most professional teachers do not rely on just one system. They tend to blend various good ideas together to form their own discipline plan. Having said these much regarding the methods of teaching and classroom environment, let us has ten to what meant by active learning methods and different kinds of ALMs [19].

Active learning method mainly focuses on making materials, tasks and activities relevant to learners' needs, levels and learning styles. This is to mean that there will be a heavy emphasis on relevance to learning needs, which is active and effective. Through active learning individual students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and development of higher order thinking skills to understand new information and to be able to use (apply) their understanding.

Learning is a development process in which learners use their existing knowledge to make sense of the flow of new information. For instance, picture the mind as a kind of network similar to the molecular structures you see in chemistry laboratories. New atoms of knowledge can only be fitted into the network, if the necessary connections are already there. Learning, in other words, is a process in which learners use their existing knowledge in order to make the new knowledge.

Statements of the Problem

Many scholarly works have so far dedicated to the study of various aspects of education policy, pedagogy, curriculum design, active learning methods and continuous assessments. Among them focused on the impact of research on mathematical education, on the curriculum planning. Even if using active learning method have numerous value for

effective learning, the teachers of English language and literature do not apply the active learning methods [28].

Therefore, this study investigates the factors that hinder the application of active learning methods in linguistic courses at English language and literature department 2nd year students. In the course of the study, the researcher try to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the main factors affecting the implementation of active learning methods in linguistic classes?
2. What are the opportunities and challenges in applying ALMs in Linguistic courses?
3. What are the strategies used to overcome those challenges in linguistic courses?

Objective of the Research

The study has the following general and specific objectives.

General Objectives

The general objective of this action research was to explore the obstacles/setbacks that impede the implementation of active learning methods in Linguistic Courses.

Specific Objectives

1. Investigate both students' and teachers' feelings towards active learning methods.
2. Explore factors that hinder the application of ALMs in Linguistic classes.
3. Identify the prevalent practices, opportunities and threats of ALMs Linguistic classes.
4. Seek remedial solutions for the identified problems in linguistic courses.

2. Material and Method

2.1. Subject of the Study

The target population of this research were both 2nd year English Language and Literature students, and the teachers.

2.2. Source of Data

The researcher used both teachers and students as sources of data for this action research.

2.3. Data Gathering Tools

To collect the important information for the research the researcher was used the instruments such as questionnaire, and systematic observation. The reason for selecting questionnaire is to get huge information from the informant since he/she fills the questionnaire individually without the influence of any one. Observation also selected because of the need to get deep and tangible information.

2.4. Methods of Data Analysis

Any research project entails, in one way or another, the use and analysis of document. In accordance with this, the researcher is expected to analyze the collected data critically. The data is collected through different methods. These collected

data was analyzed by using tables, graphs and also paragraphs.

3. Result and Discussions

3.1. Introduction

In part three brief explanation of the methodology of the study including instruments of data collection and study population were thoroughly made. As it could be clear from

the discussion, a questionnaire and observation were the two instruments utilized in gathering the data. Therefore, this part presents the analysis and discussion of the result.

3.2. Analysis of Data Obtained Through Questionnaire

The Techniques Instructors use in Delivering Lesson.

Table 1. Students' response for the techniques used in delivering the lesson.

No.	Question	Type of Techniques	No. of Respondents	%
1.	What techniques do your instructors use in delivering the lesson for linguistic courses?	L	3	10%
		G	2	6.7%
		C	-	
		P	1	3.3%
		L&G	-	
		G&C	4	13.3%
		G&P	5	16.7%
		G,C&P	12	40%
L,G,C&P	3	10%		
		30	100	

Key L = Lecture, G = Group Discussion, C = Class Discussion, P = Presentation, L & G= Lecture & Group Discussion, G & C = Group & Class discussion, G & P= Group discussion & Presentation, G, C & P = Group Discussion, Class Discussion & presentation L, G, C & P = Lecture, Group discussion, Class Discussion & Presentation.

The question on the above Table asked the students which techniques their instructors used among the given four options i.e. lecture, group discussion, class discussion & presentation while delivering their lesson.

For this question out of 30 students 12 (40%) stated that their teachers use group discussion, class discussion and presentation. The rest 5 (16.7%), 4 (13.3%), 3 (10%), 2 (6.7%), and 1 (3.3%) of students respectively responded that

their teachers use the combination of group discussion and presentation; group discussion and class discussion; all of the four techniques and the combination of lecture and group discussion.

This result showed that most of the instructors used different active learning methods specially group discussion, class discussion, and presentation to deliver their lesson.

Table 2. Students response for the other techniques used by their teacher.

No.	Question	Type of Techniques	No. of Respondents	%
2	What other ALMs do your teachers use in linguistic courses?	Bus Stop method	7	23%
		Gallery method	14	13.3%
		Individual method	1	3.1%
		Gold Fish	1	3.1%
			23	77%

Note-From total 7(23%) students didn't mention additional ALMs for linguistic courses.

The above table indicated that, 7 (23%) of students stated that their teacher use bus stop method; 4(13.3%) of students mentioned gallery method; 1,1 student respectively responded individual work and gold fish teaching methods are used to deliver the lesson. The rest 17 stated that they do not know

other techniques rather than the mentioned above.

This result showed that there are teachers who used Bus Stop, Gallery, Individual work and Gold Fish Bowl methods in addition to the above four stated methods of teaching to deliver their lesson as needed.

3.3. Types of Active Learning Methods the Students Know

Table 3. Results that identify the active learning methods the students know.

No.	Question	Type of Techniques	Res. No.	%	No. Res.	%	Total%
3.	What techniques do your instructors use in delivering the lesson in linguistic courses?	Lecture	20	66.7	10	33.3	100%
		Group discussion	20	66.7	10	33.3	100%
		Class discussion	20	66.7	10	33.3	100%
		Presentation	20	66.7	10	33.3	100%
		Buss top	10	33.3	20	66.7	100%
		Gallery method	10	33.3	20	66.7	100%
		Goldfish	10	33.3	20	66.7	100%

Key Res. No=Number of respondent, Non-Res.=Number of non respondent.

The result of the above Table indicated that among 30 students' 20 (66.7%) know Lecture, Group Discussion, Class Discussion and Presentation methods of teaching. The rest 10 (33.3%) students know only Bus Stop, Gallery and Gold Fish

3.4. The Learning Methods Students Prefer

Table 4. Result related with students' preferable learning methods.

No.	Question	Methods of learning	No. of Respondent	%
4	Which learning methods do you prefer for linguistic courses?	Student-centered	26	86.7%
		Teacher-centered	4	13.3%
Total			30	100%

The result obtained for question 3 above showed that most of the students 26 (86.7%) prefer student-centered method while 4 (13.3%) prefer teacher-centered methods of teaching. Their reason for selecting the student-centered methods are: (1) the active learning methods is used to share information between and among them; (2) It makes the classroom environment attractive; (3) it gives more chance for students to participate in the classroom activities; (4) it creates an opportunities for them to develop their personal skills such as feeling confident while reporting some thing and also helped them to develop their different language skills.

The 4 (13.3%) students who prefer teacher-centered methods have also stated the following reasons. (1) The teachers are more knowledgeable persons' than students; thus ,it creates an opportunity to learn more from teachers. (2) It saves time and the 3rd is it makes the classroom free from disturbance.

This result showed that even if most of the students understand what student-center method is and its advantage, there are some who belief its disadvantages exceed its advantage. This idea is emanated from the general belief that the teachers know everything. Thus, the students should learn everything from their teacher.

3.5. Analysis of Data Elicited from Respondents (Teachers)

As mentioned above, the researcher used two instruments for data collection, namely observation and questionnaire. Accordingly, the data gathered from teachers through questionnaire are analyzed as follow.

All our respondents have nearly the same or similar understanding of Active Learning Methods (ALMS). They all responded that ALMs are the methods of making the teaching and learning more students centered. They went on saying that Active Learning Methods enhance students' active participation in the lesson there by encouraging them to take responsibilities for their own learning.

The respondents also said that they use different types of active learning methods while they are delivering lesson. These include group discussion, pair work, collaborative learning, balloon game, storytelling, problem solving, role play, presentation, game and independent work.

According to our respondents, ALMs serve a number of purposes. First, it provides freedom for students to express their ideas. Secondly, it motivates the learners to actively

Bowl the teaching methods.

This showed that there is difference between and among students on the knowledge of teaching methods.

participate in the class. Moreover, it encourages the learners to take their own responsibility for their own learning. Thirdly, it enhances the quality of education in general.

It is true that ALMs have got their own specific characteristics. According to our respondents, the specific characteristics of ALMs are the following: the learners can learn from one another, the role of the teacher is limited as a source of knowledge, students learn by doing, it rewards and motivates students, time consuming, needs a lot of resources, is more challenging & difficult to conduct, learners are the main actors of learning, and it increases learners creativity

In an attempt to apply different active learning methods, the instructors encountered different issues. These are large class size, some students 'in difference to active learning methods, lack of resources, students' background, time constraints, the impact of traditional methods of teaching and the like.

The instructors used different strategies to overcome the aforementioned drawbacks. For example, they tried to use the active learning method which is appropriate to a large class size. They also tried to convince students the necessity of applying active learning methods. The instructors also attempted to solve the problem of time constraints by arranging make up classes to cover the uncovered portions.

The learners' reaction towards the application of Active learning is almost similar. Some students think that the application of ALMs is to make them busy rather than teaching them. And some of the students believe that it is a mechanism of reducing the instructors' burden and to load the burden of learning and teaching on the learners. Generally, speaking the majority of students has a negative attitude to wards the application of active learning methods particularly at an initial stage.

Overall, the following factors hinder the application of active learning methods: lack of awareness about ALMs, lack of resources and facilities, students negative attitude towards ALMs, students poor academic background, large class size, the influence of traditional method of teaching, and poor or rigid curriculum design

According to our respondents, ALMs have got both opportunities and, threats. On the one hand, it helps learners to develop self-confidence and enhance their creativity. It also promotes the students' independent learning and their capacity to solve problems independently.

On the other hand, it is very difficult to apply ALMs in cases of large class size and due to lack of resources. It is also time consuming thus very difficult to cover the portion in time.

3.6. Analysis of Data Gathered Through Observation

During the observation, the researcher were able to identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of the instructors while they were delivering the lesson. To begin with, most of the instructors are competent enough in setting clear, appropriate and achievable objectives in planning the lesson. They are also equally competent in communicating the objectives of the lesson to the learners clearly and neatly again except for few instructors. However, all instructors have a good command of language skills that help them to affectively, transfer knowledge to the learners.

With respect to teaching methods, very few instructors attempt to apply student centered approach through group works and class discussions. But it is not successful as they immediately resort to more talk in delivering the lesson in stead of providing more opportunities for students to have their say in the lesson. This more talk by instructors would surely hinder the students active participation in the lesson. It also demotivates and discourages the learners.

The researcher also observed that most of the activities in the class room are done individually rather than in group or pairs. With regard to the teaching process in the class room, the instructors use either inductive or deductive method and in a very few cases combination of both method show ever, according to some literatures, using inductive method is more fruitful in making the learners clearly understand the concept of the lessons.

According to the researcher' observation, the teaching methodology used by the instructors being observed benefits more auditory learners than visual and/ or kinesthetic learners. This is attributed to two main reasons. First, the instructors dominate the class through a lot of talk in delivering the lesson. Secondly, they don't use demonstrations or drama in delivering the lesson which may also benefit the visual and kinesthetic learners.

On the other hand, all the instructors have an extraordinary capacity in making the instructions clear to their students. They do not also hesitate to repeat the questions until the learners get it right. In light with this, the researcher observed that the students have a serious difficulty in understanding instructions unless the instructors repeated the mover and over again. This clearly indicates that the students lack a good command of instructional language-English.

Another strength of instructors is the effective use of black board and clear and visible hand writing. However, the researcher didn't witness while the instructors are using other instructional materials than notebooks and textbooks.

With respect to classroom management most instructors act as manager, leader, advisor and guider. They demonstrate a combination of these qualities. In most cases, the students sit straight row in the classroom. But in a very few cases the sitting arrangement is in groups. The researcher also

observed that most instructors show the tendency to go round and motivate students when ever group or pair discussion is undergoing.

Moreover, the researcher observed that all instructors are punctual, and most of the maro friendly to the students. They move around and try to help students by providing clarification during group discussion.

At the end of each lesson, the instructors provide questions and provide exercises for the students. But most instructors do not provide adequate and constructive feedback on the spot because of time constraints. Besides, most of the instructors prefer to supply answers on their own instead of eliciting response from the learners themselves.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

The result of this action research in dictates that both teachers and students are perfectly aware of the use of Active Learning Methods in delivering lesson. However, they lack willingness and commitment to practically apply it. Moreover, there is misconception regarding the use of ALMs especially on the part of students. They consider ALMs a means of easing teachers' work load and making students busy. According to the findings, the main issues/threats that hinder the application of ALMs include: Lack of willingness and commitment from teachers and students, most students' negative attitude towards ALMs, large class size, lack of resources and facilities, students' poor academic background, and the influence of old method of teaching.

In order to overcome the problems that hinder the application of ALMs, it is very essential to organize consecutive trainings and workshops for all concerned bodies so as to boost their commitments and willingness in the application of ALMs. Regular discussion and sharing experiences could also be another means of avoiding factors that hinder the application of ALMs. Moreover provision of resources and facilities may also urge both teachers and students to apply ALMs.

On the other hand, there are some opportunities that can facilitate the application of ALMs. One of these opportunities is that the teachers and students' awareness of the existence of different types of ALMs although they didn't make any effort to actually apply them. Another opportunity is the teachers' competence in preparing smart lesson and in delivering the lesson.

The use of ALMs create natural context of learning which allows for the exercise of independent learning, concentrating on getting students to do things, expressing concepts and to carry out various activities. Awareness of teaching is empowering. The more interest teachers have in gaining awareness of how they teach, them or freedom they will have to direct their teaching towards successful student learning.

There are A-Z active learning methods: cross over and pyramiding, jigsaw learning, buzz group and gap pedlecture, questions and answers, independent work, brainstorming,

presentation, projectwork, elicitation, drama, body language (gesture), casestudies, action research, cooperative learning, debating, hot seating, ranking tasks, reflection, problems solving, picture analysis, interview, microteaching, visits, demonstration, story telling and active listening, games, role-play, pair and group work. Therefore, teachers ought to apply accordingly and use the learner as a resource.

4.2. Intervention

The researcher suggested the following intervention strategies: Increase our students' awareness regarding the use of ALMs, apply all types of ALMs with the existing resources and facilities, share experience with one another, and capacitate students to increase their participation.

Results after Intervention (Post intervention)

In the intervention stage, the researcher held panel discussion both with teachers and students. Accordingly, two of the four students who preferred teacher centered approach at the beginning have changed their mind and accepted the student-centered approach. Similarly, all the four major course teachers agreed that nothing will hinder them to apply most of the active learning methods.

5. Recommendations

Even if using ALMs is used to produce confident and knowledgeable citizens there are many problems that hinder its application. Thus, the university should prepare different workshop to develop the knowledge of teachers and students on ALMs in general and linguistic courses in particular, the university should follow and acknowledge those teachers who apply ALMs in the classroom, and it is also recommended if other researcher do on this topic at university level.

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