

Ascertaining the Pedagogical Preferences of EFL Teachers in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract. Recent studies have shown that ESL/EFL teachers could develop personalized theories about the teaching and learning of English as a second/foreign language and that these theories manifest themselves in the actual language classroom processes. Consequently, a methodological gap may occur between what teachers are doing and what program administrators and writers of textbook guidelines expect the teachers to be doing. For this reason, EFL administrators should attempt to ascertain the pedagogical preferences of their teachers. This paper presents a self-monitoring evaluative tool which may help in gauging methodological proclivity. The paper reports the findings of an administration of this instrument to the seventeen EFL teachers of a department of English at a major university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The results of this study show that the subjects' pedagogical preference is for Communicative Language Teaching; still these EFL teachers also advocated some support for the theoretical principles of two other methodologies: Audiolingual Teaching and Grammar-Translation Method.

Introduction

This paper presents an instrument through which Saudi Arabian administrators of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs will be able to determine the pedagogical preferences of their teachers. Increasingly, EFL administrators are finding out that, just as the learning style preferences of language students must be taken into account, also the preferred methodological styles of teachers must be considered [1-4]. As Richards [5, p. 118] writes, EFL administrators must develop means of ascertaining "whether the teacher's instructional practices are relevant to the programs's goals and objectives."

Similarly, EFL teachers need "to gain a firmer definition of themselves as teachers, their own philosophy of teaching and the kinds of roles they could take on as language teachers," Gebhart and Duncan [6, p. 18] state. An aspect of "reflective teaching" [7] is that teachers need the opportunity to reflect critically on their teaching so they can gain a better understanding of their own methodological preferences and instructional processes. By encouraging teachers to reflectively evaluate their own performance, self-monitoring evaluation becomes an integral part of both curriculum and teacher development, Nunan [8, p. 147] writes. Although language teachers might regard themselves "as practical people and not as theorists" [9, p. 23], yet what they do in the

classroom could be a reflection of a theory about both the nature of language and the nature of language teaching.

Since the quality of a faculty can make or break a language program [10], both administrators and teachers in EFL programs must be concerned with the theoretical preferences which guide a program's teachers [11]. However, as studies by Swaffar, Arens, and Morgan [12] and Long and Sato [13] show, language teachers are often unaware of the methodological approaches they are using. Richards [5, p. 119] writes that in the classroom they are frequently "guided by impulse, intuition, or routine" instead of "reflection and critical thinking." A gap between what teachers are doing and what they imagine themselves to be doing may result. Methodological theories sometimes become "personalized theories," as Burns' [14, p. 56] survey of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in Canada revealed. Nunan [8, p. 108] also agrees that in this personalizing process, ESL/EFL teachers are not always guided by "what applied linguists and curriculum specialists say they ought to do." Thus, a second gap manifests itself: between what teachers are doing and what they are expected to be doing (by methodologically-oriented program administrators and writers of textbook guidelines).

Continual self-monitoring of language teachers' methodological guiding principles about the nature of language and the nature of language learning is needed. This paper attempts to present an easily-administered instrument which EFL administrators and teachers may find helpful in gauging the pedagogical preferences of teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The paper also reports the findings of an administration of this instrument, which is followed by an analysis of these findings.

Literature Review

The issues of teachers' pedagogical preferences did not manifest itself until the 1970s when Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) began to challenge the theoretical assumptions of the then dominant approach to teaching ESL/EFL: Audiolingual Teaching (ALT). The rapidity with which the principles of ALT had superseded those of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) after World War II had never allowed much debate over whether teachers should prefer ALT to GTM [8, p. 28]. One of the methods which CLT proponents quickly used to "discredit" ALT was to ask ESL/EFL teachers to consider their pedagogical preferences between the two methodologies.

De Garcia, Reynolds, and Savignon [15] developed the Foreign Language Attitude Survey for Teachers (FLAST) to show L2 (second language) teachers the way "their values are reflected in their teaching practices," as Savignon states [16, p. 118]. This instrument consisted of fifty statements about L2 learning and language teaching, to which teachers were to respond on a span running from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The value of the FLAST, its designers claimed, was that "a comparison of responses" will reveal "the differences in attitude among teachers working together,

presumably toward similar goals. An exploration of these differences is the first step toward clarification of program goals and the way in which they can best be met" [16, p. 122].

Although the FLAST has been widely used, a decision was made by this researcher not to adopt it for a planned pedagogical preference survey for three different reasons. First, the instrument is heavily weighed toward the principles of CLT. GTM and ALT principles are usually phrased in the negative (Item 1: "The grammar-translation approach to second language learning is not effective in developing oral communication skills." Item 15: "Taped lessons generally lose student interest"). On the other hand, CLT principles are typically rendered positively (Item 36: "Simulated real-life situations should be used to teach conversation skills." Item 48) "Language learning should be fun"). A second reason for not using the FLAST was that it is a broad-based L2 instrument, with items referring to the teaching of German, French, Spanish, and Latin, not just to the teaching of English. Furthermore, its items relating to the teaching of English are normed on ESL, which might not be as reliable or as valid with the EFL subjects of this researcher's survey because of different language and cultural backgrounds.

While FLAST is CLT-biased and ESL-oriented, a second major teacher pedagogical preference instrument, the one developed by the Australian Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) — probably the largest ESL programs in the world [8] — does strive for balance. It presents four CLT statements, three "traditional" language teaching statements (based on ALT and GTM), and two "buffer" statements which overlap between the communicative and traditional. The options for the respondents, based on Quinn [17], range from "virtual non-use" in the classroom to "essential use." The results of the initial use of the survey showed that "the concept of 'communicative language teaching' is salient," with all three traditional statements being found by almost all of the sixty subjects as "trivial, incidental use," while the CLT statements were adjudged as "essential" or "important" [8, pp. 28-32].

While its statements are more objective and do not contain an ESL orientation, the AMEP questionnaire was adjudged by this researcher to have two limitations: its brevity and its linking together GTM and ALT under one heading, "traditional." Both militate against a teacher's considering the broad range of pedagogical issues involved in language acquisition or even the fact that "teachers also sometimes devise their own 'methods' by pulling together a few techniques that appeal to them," as Stevick [18, p. 204] writes. Other teacher pedagogical preference instruments, such as Christison and Bassano [19] and Pak [20], deal very well with the minutiae of classroom processes, but to this researcher they do not seem to focus on stimulating a critical reflection on a teacher's philosophy or methodological style.

Therefore, the researcher's decision was to develop a mechanism which would contain an equal number of statements based on the guiding principles of GTM, ALT, and CLT. (See Seaton [21] for basic definitions of the methods.) These statements would

contrast the three methodologies in the theoretical areas which Richards and Rodgers [22] indicate to delineate a language methodology:

- (1) 'approach,' which provides theories on the nature of language and learning,
- (2) 'design,' which principally specifies objectives, learning-teaching activities, and learner and teacher roles,
- (3) while Richards and Rodgers' [22] third area, 'procedure,' was not included in the instrument because it deals with classroom techniques, not principles.

In drafting the statements about each methodology, the researcher tried to use sources which were primary and non-prejudicial; that is, for example, proponents of CLT were not used in the drafting of statements about ALT. For GTM, sources used were Coleman [23], Kelly [24], Sweet [25], and Titone [26]. For ALT, Allen [27], Chastain [28], Fries [29], and Lado [30]. For CLT, Littlewood [31], Savignon [16], and Widdowson [32].

Methodology: Instrument, Subjects and Procedures

Evaluative Instrument

The final design of the EFL teacher pedagogical preference instrument used in this paper consists of a self-reporting questionnaire developed on the basis of the three major methodologies. The 5-point Likert scale was used: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Thus, the resulting survey contained three constructs (GTM, ALT, and CLT), each construct consisting of ten statements. (See Appendix A.) For example, if a respondent preferred CLT, it was posited that his responses to almost all of the ten CLT statements would be SA or A on the Likert scale.

In the survey submitted to the subjects, these statements were intermixed in random order, so that the subjects would not be able to identify a statement with a particular methodology. However, in Appendix A and the tables of the Results Section of this paper, the statements were reordered to reflect the methodological preferences of the subjects in order to facilitate statistical purposes.

Subjects

Seventeen subjects from the department of English at a College of Education of a major university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were used in the study. These subjects constitute the entire teaching staff affiliated to the department. The survey requested certain demographic information concerning whether the respondent was a Saudi/non-Saudi, the number of years of experience in teaching English, and the highest academic degree. All subjects were males.

Procedures

The survey was distributed to the seventeen subjects, each of whom was asked to return it within one week. Thus, the subjects were not monitored while they completed

the survey. The subjects' responses were analyzed using the statistical package StatView 4.0.

Results

Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the responses of the subjects according to the three methodologies. Table 4 records means, with standard deviation, standard error, variance, and coefficient variance. Table 5 lists the percentages on the scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree for each statement.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

Generally speaking, the results of this study show that the subjects' pedagogical preference is for CLT, but significantly the subjects showed a degree of affinity with some statements about ALT and GTM. As a percentage of the responses of all subjects, eight of the ten CLT statements received a Strongly Agree or Agree response more than 60% of the times. Six of the ten ALT statements received a similar percentage of response, and four of the GTM did. An examination of specific contrasting statements relevant to 'approach' and 'design' provides a better breakdown of the responses.

Approach

Basically, statements 1, 6, 9 and 10 of all three methodologies dealt with approach as defined by Richards and Rodgers [22] and Anthony [33]: the nature of language and the nature of language learning. These statements were concerned with linguistic competence/structure (advocated by GTM and ALT) and communicative competence/meaning (CLT); accuracy (GTM and ALT) and fluency (advocated by CLT); and the use of the native language (GTM favors a greater use of native language alongside the target language than does either ALT or CLT).

1. Overwhelmingly, the respondents favored a communicative/meaning emphasis in EFL over a linguistic/structural emphasis. No subject strongly agreed or agreed with the ALT statement that "linguistic competence is more important to learning a language than meaningful communication," while only 17.6% agreed with the corresponding GTM statement, "A focus on meaning/content may prevent language students from developing grammatical accuracy." Almost 94% strongly agreed or agreed with the CLT statement that "meaning should be emphasized in communicative activities."

2. Concerning the fluency/accuracy dichotomy, surprisingly—especially when considering the proclivity of the subjects toward communicative competence over linguistic competence—the subjects favored accuracy over fluency. Almost 94% strongly agreed or agreed with the ALT statement that "linguistic accuracy and correct pronunciation of the target language should be sought," and 63% with the GTM statement that "concentration on structure and vocabulary" are important. Only 25% agreed with the CLT statement that "fluency, not accuracy, in the target language should be sought." A possible explanation for this seeming contradiction is that the subjects of this study teach at a faculty of education, preparing their students to be school teachers

Table 1. Pedagogical preference: GTM.

| ID | Nationality | Experience | Degree | GT1 | GT2 | GT3 | GT4 | GT5 | GT6 | GT7 | GT8 | GT9 | GT10 |
|----|-------------|------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1 | Saudi | 1-3 | Ph.D. | A | A | SD | U | A | SD | SD | D | U | SD |
| 2 | Non-Saudi | 5 | Ph.D. | A | D | A | SA | D | SA | SA | D | D | D |
| 3 | Non-Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | A | U | SD | A | A | A | A | A | D | D |
| 4 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | Ph.D. | U | D | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | D |
| 5 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | Ph.D. | D | SD | D | D | A | D | D | D | U | D |
| 6 | Saudi | 5-10 | M.A. | A | D | D | U | D | D | U | A | A | A |
| 7 | Non-Saudi | 11-20 | M.A. | D | D | SD | U | A | D | SD | D | A | SD |
| 8 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | Ph.D. | A | SD | D | SA | SD | A | A | D | A | SD |
| 9 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | M.A. | D | D | SD | D | D | D | D | A | A | SA |
| 10 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | M.A. | D | D | D | SD | A | U | A | A | A | A |
| 11 | Non-Saudi | 11-20 | Ph.D. | A | A | D | SA | A | D | A | A | SD | A |
| 12 | Non-Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | A | D | U | A | A | U | U | A | U | D |
| 13 | Saudi | 1-3 | Ph.D. | A | D | D | SA | D | A | A | U | SD | D |
| 14 | Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | A | A | D | A | A | A | A | D | D | D |
| 15 | Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | D | D | SA | D | D | D | A | SA | SD | SD |
| 16 | Saudi | 1-3 | M.A. | SA | A | A | A | A | SA | A | D | A | D |
| 17 | Saudi | 1-3 | Ph.D. | D | SA | SD | A | A | SA | A | U | A | U |

Table 2. Pedagogical preference: ALT

| ID | Nationality | Experience | Degree | GT1 | GT2 | GT3 | GT4 | GT5 | GT6 | GT7 | GT8 | GT9 | GT10 |
|----|-------------|------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1 | Saudi | 1-3 | Ph.D. | D | U | D | A | A | SD | A | SA | SA | D |
| 2 | Non-Saudi | 5 | Ph.D. | D | SA | D | SA | A | A | SA | A | A | D |
| 3 | Non-Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | D | A | A | A | A | A | A | U | U | D |
| 4 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | Ph.D. | D | D | U | A | U | D | A | U | U | D |
| 5 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | Ph.D. | D | D | D | D | D | D | A | D | A | D |
| 6 | Saudi | 5-10 | M.A. | U | A | U | A | A | D | A | U | A | D |
| 7 | Non-Saudi | 11-20 | M.A. | D | A | D | SA | A | D | SA | A | SA | D |
| 8 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | Ph.D. | D | SA | SA | A | SA | SD | A | A | A | SD |
| 9 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | M.A. | D | SA | SD | SA | A | A | A | SA | SA | D |
| 10 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | M.A. | SD | D | D | A | A | D | SA | A | SA | SD |
| 11 | Non-Saudi | 11-20 | Ph.D. | U | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | SD | D |
| 12 | Non-Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | D | A | U | A | A | U | A | U | A | U |
| 13 | Saudi | 1-3 | Ph.D. | U | SA | A | A | A | SD | A | U | D | D |
| 14 | Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | D | A | A | SA | SA | A | SA | SA | SA | D |
| 15 | Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | D | D | D | D | SA | A | SA | A | SA | D |
| 16 | Saudi | 1-3 | M.A. | U | SA | A | SA | SA | SA | A | SA | D | A |
| 17 | Saudi | 1-3 | Ph.D. | D | A | A | SA | SA | SA | SA | A | SA | D |

Table 3. Pedagogical preference: CLT

| ID | Nationality | Experience | Degree | GT1 | GT2 | GT3 | GT4 | GT5 | GT6 | GT7 | GT8 | GT9 | GT10 |
|----|-------------|------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1 | Saudi | 1-3 | Ph.D. | SA | SA | A | U | D | A | SA | A | A | A |
| 2 | Non-Saudi | 5 | Ph.D. | SA | D | A | D | A | D | SA | D | A | SA |
| 3 | Non-Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | A | A | U | U | D | D | A | SA | A | A |
| 4 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | Ph.D. | U | SA | A | U | U | U | A | A | A | SA |
| 5 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | Ph.D. | SA | A | A | A | D | SA | SA | SA | A | SA |
| 6 | Saudi | 5-10 | M.A. | U | D | U | U | A | A | A | A | SA | A |
| 7 | Non-Saudi | 11-20 | M.A. | SA | A | A | D | D | A | A | A | A | A |
| 8 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | Ph.D. | SA | SA | SA | SD | D | A | A | A | D | SA |
| 9 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | M.A. | SA | SA | A | D | A | SA | SA | SA | SA | SA |
| 10 | Non-Saudi | 20+ | M.A. | SA | SA | A | A | D | A | A | A | SA | A |
| 11 | Non-Saudi | 11-20 | Ph.D. | A | A | D | D | U | SA | A | A | A | U |
| 12 | Non-Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | A | U | U | D | D | A | U | A | U | A |
| 13 | Saudi | 1-3 | Ph.D. | U | U | SA | A | A | U | A | A | U | A |
| 14 | Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | A | U | D | D | SD | D | A | A | A | A |
| 15 | Saudi | 5-10 | Ph.D. | SA | A | A | SD | A | D | A | SA | SA | SA |
| 16 | Saudi | 1-3 | M.A. | U | SA | A | D | U | U | A | SA | A | A |
| 17 | Saudi | 1-3 | Ph.D. | A | U | D | A | A | A | A | U | SA | A |

Table 4. Mean for each statement

| | Mean | Std. Dev. | Std. Error | Variance | Coef. var. |
|------|-------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|
| GT1 | 2.688 | 1.078 | .270 | 1.163 | 40.119 |
| GT2 | 3.45 | 1.176 | .285 | 1.382 | 26.65 |
| GT3 | 4 | .935 | .227 | .875 | 23.385 |
| GT4 | 2.312 | 1.25 | .312 | 1.562 | 54.054 |
| GT5 | 2.75 | 1.065 | .266 | 1.133 | 38.712 |
| GT6 | 2.875 | 1.31 | .328 | 1.717 | 45.573 |
| GT7 | 2.438 | 1.094 | .273 | 1.196 | 44.863 |
| GT8 | 2.938 | 1.063 | .266 | 1.129 | 36.174 |
| GT9 | 3.312 | 1.25 | .312 | 1.562 | 37.736 |
| GT10 | 3.706 | 1.105 | .268 | 1.221 | 29.812 |
| AL1 | 3.824 | .529 | .128 | .279 | 13.825 |
| AL2 | 2.235 | 1.147 | .278 | 1.316 | 51.324 |
| AL3 | 3 | 1.155 | .289 | 1.333 | 38.49 |
| AL4 | 1.706 | .772 | .187 | .596 | 45.24 |
| AL5 | 1.875 | .719 | .18 | .517 | 38.336 |
| AL6 | 3.176 | 1.38 | .335 | 1.904 | 43.445 |
| AL7 | 1.647 | .493 | .119 | .243 | 29.907 |
| AL8 | 2.067 | .884 | .228 | .781 | 42.76 |
| AL9 | 2.062 | 1.289 | .322 | 1.663 | 62.515 |
| AL10 | 3.941 | .659 | .16 | .434 | 16.712 |
| CL1 | 1.688 | .793 | .198 | .629 | 47.004 |
| CL2 | 2.118 | 1.054 | .256 | .629 | 47.004 |
| CL3 | 2.412 | .939 | .228 | .882 | 38.948 |
| CL4 | 3.438 | 1.031 | .258 | 1.062 | 29.986 |
| CL5 | 3.188 | 1.047 | .262 | 1.096 | 32.841 |
| CL6 | 2.438 | 1.094 | .273 | 1.196 | 44.863 |
| CL7 | 1.824 | .529 | .128 | .279 | 28.987 |
| CL8 | 1.882 | .781 | .189 | .61 | 41.502 |
| CL9 | 1.941 | .827 | .201 | .684 | 42.6 |
| CL10 | 1.706 | .588 | .143 | .346 | 34.461 |

Table 5. Percentage of SA, A, U, D, SD for each statement.

| | GT1 | GT2 | GT3 | GT4 | GT5 | GT6 | GT7 | GT8 | GT9 | GT10 |
|----|-------|--------|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| SA | 6.25 | 5.882 | 0 | 31.25 | 0 | 18.75 | 12.5 | 6.25 | 0 | 5.882 |
| A | 56.25 | 23.529 | 11.765 | 31.25 | 62.5 | 25 | 56.25 | 37.5 | 37.5 | 11.765 |
| U | 0 | 5.882 | 5.882 | 18.75 | 6.25 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 18.75 | 5.882 |
| D | 37.5 | 52.941 | 52.941 | 12.5 | 25 | 37.5 | 12.5 | 43.75 | 18.75 | 58.824 |
| SD | 0 | 11.765 | 29.412 | 6.25 | 6.25 | 6.25 | 6.25 | 0 | 25 | 17.647 |

Table 5 (contd.)

| | AL1 | AL2 | AL3 | AL4 | AL5 | AL6 | AL7 | AL8 | AL9 | AL10 |
|----|--------|--------|------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| SA | 0 | 29.412 | 6.25 | 41.176 | 25 | 11.765 | 35.294 | 26.667 | 43.75 | 0 |
| A | 0 | 41.176 | 37.5 | 52.941 | 68.75 | 29.412 | 64.706 | 46.667 | 31.25 | 5.882 |
| U | 23.529 | 5.882 | 12.5 | 0 | 0 | 5.882 | 0 | 20 | 6.25 | 5.882 |
| D | 70.588 | 23.529 | 37.5 | 5.88 | 6.25 | 35.294 | 0 | 6.667 | 12.5 | 76.471 |
| SD | 5.882 | 0 | 6.25 | 0 | 0 | 17.647 | 0 | 0 | 6.25 | 11.765 |

| | CL1 | CL2 | CL3 | CL4 | CL5 | CL6 | CL7 | CL8 | CL9 | CL10 |
|----|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| SA | 50 | 35.294 | 11.294 | 0 | 0 | 18.75 | 23.529 | 29.412 | 29.412 | 35.294 |
| A | 31.25 | 29.412 | 52.941 | 25 | 37.5 | 43.75 | 70.588 | 58.824 | 52.941 | 58.824 |
| U | 18.75 | 23.529 | 17.529 | 17.647 | 18.75 | 12.5 | 5.882 | 5.882 | 11.765 | 5.882 |
| D | 0 | 11.765 | 17.647 | 43.75 | 43.75 | 25 | 0 | 5.882 | 5.882 | 0 |
| SD | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12.5 | 6.25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

of English grammar. So, they believe that their students must concentrate on accuracy because they will be future language teachers. Furthermore, the subjects might not have seen a conflict here because in their answer to GTM statement 10, 63% indicated that they felt a meaning-based approach would not "prevent" their students "from developing grammatical accuracy."

3. Statements 9 of each methodology dealt with the ratio between the use of the native language (NL) and the target language (TL) in the classroom. Overwhelmingly, 82% supported the CLT statement that "the target language should be used as a medium of instruction, but a little use of the native language may be permitted, if deemed helpful," with 75% supporting the similar ALT statement advocating "minimal" NL use. This is in compliance with the latest tendency in methodological research, and even with the recent decision of the BBC Teaching Programs, to use NL. Only 37.5% agreed (none strongly agreed) with the GLT position of a greater use of the NL.

Design

Design is principally concerned with 'goals' in relation to learning-teaching activities: the roles of the teacher, and the learners. Statements 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 of each of the methodologies principally dealt with these areas.

1. In ESL/EFL language teaching, the term “learning-teaching activities” indicates the emphasis which a methodology places on the activities designed around the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. One of the two indigenous aspects of GTM, its translation activities, received very little support, although this methodology’s focusing on the reading and writing skills did. Concerning the value of translation, only 29% of the subjects believed that “finding equivalents in the native language for all words of the target language facilitates language learning” and only 12% agreed (none strongly agreed) that “attention should be paid to translating sentences from the target language into the native language.” However, 69% felt that “students should be able” to do such translation. There is no contradiction between these responses, since they seem to affirm that the respondents believe students should be able to translate, but they should not be taught to translate in class. In other words, a methodology such as GTM which concentrates class time on the native language, not the target language, is not preferred. As the responses to GTM statements 4 and 5 reveal, the respondents believe that the grammar part of GTM is valid (62.5% agree that grammatical rules should be taught). Similarly, its emphasis on the reading and writing skills (62.5% strongly agree or agree that these are important) retain a hold on the subjects’ classroom processes.

For ALT, the respondents felt that concentrating on oral skills is essential (94%). Seemingly conflicting responses occurred when ALT statements 2, 5, and 10 were analyzed. Only 6% of the respondents believed that “manipulating language” is more valuable than focusing on content; however, 70.5% felt that such manipulations (this term was not overtly used in ALT statement 2) as “repetition, substitution, and transformation drills” are “essential for learning a language,” and 84% advocated that “grammatical rules should be taught through examples and drills” (ALT5). An inference is that a large number of the subjects (most of whom were trained in ALT) retain an ambiguous affinity for some of ALT’s guiding principles, such as that a target language is learned through its being manipulated; this was evident in relation to the years-of-experience variant.

For CLT, 81% stressed that a major goal of a language program is developing “conversational skills,” and 64% agreed or strongly agreed that “second language learning occurs when it is based on oral communicative activities.” Only 37.5% agreed (none strongly agreed) that “direct teaching of grammar should be avoided.” 94% felt that CLT negotiation, the opposite of ALT manipulation—although of course CLT statement 7 did not state this—is essential in language learning. An eclectic pattern begins to manifest itself: the EFL teachers of this survey believe that the theoretical (approach) principles of CLT—emphasis on a meaning-based classroom focused on the target language—are preferable, but, in implementation, they favor a methodological plethora of designs (drawn from GTM, ALT, and CLT) to manifest these principles.

This ambiguity is borne out by looking at another teaching-learning activity in the language classroom: the handling of errors. While GTM advocates never state a policy regarding errors, implicit in the methodology is that translation will be correct. Thus in

phrasing GTM statement 7, this researcher avoided using the word "correct." The statement reads: "Students should be able to translate from the native language into the target language and vice versa." And 69% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. For ALT, there is an overt policy concerning errors and their correction: "Errors should be avoided in language learning, and if they occur they must be corrected," to which 41% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed. Meanwhile, 62% strongly agreed or agreed with the CLT statement that "during the early stages of second/foreign language acquisition, syntactic errors should be accepted as signs of development and they should not be corrected." The results seem to indicate that the particular classroom situation, not any hard and fast design principle, will dictate when a teacher decides to correct or not to correct.

2. Statement 8 of each methodology concerns the role of the teacher. Basically, GTM and ALT manifest a teacher-fronted classroom, while CLT advocates a learner-centered classroom. Each methodology's views of the teacher's principal role received significant support. 44% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the GTM statement that, "the teacher is the principal source of correct answers in the classroom," and 73% supported the similar, but more limiting, ALT statement that the teacher is the major source of correct pronunciation. 88% saw the teacher in a CLT perspective as a "facilitator of learning." Tellingly, none strongly disagreed with any statement; this is an indication that the subjects conceive their roles as teachers to be broader than those advocated by any one methodology. However, the larger percentage who advocate the facilitative teacher seems to indicate a propensity of the subjects away from the teacher-fronted classroom.

3. The roles of the students in a language classroom have already been discussed above. In the GTM classroom, the student is expected to learn grammar through translating; that is, the student will find equivalents in the NL to words in the TL, do much reading and writing, and study grammatical rules overtly taught. As mentioned earlier, the respondents of this study basically favored students doing grammar activities, but not translating activities. The student in the ALT classroom will do much repeating, drilling, and manipulating of language, usually in a language laboratory. In this connection, ALT statement 7 dealt with whether the language lab "facilitates language learning," and 100% of the respondents felt it did. A large number of the respondents felt that these are valuable activities for students, if the students do them in meaning-based situations.

The students in a CLT classroom are engaged in games, role-playing, negotiating, and predicting activities, often involving student-to-student interaction, not teacher-fronted activities. The subjects' responses to CLT statements 2, 3, and 7 indicate that there is a 64-94% approval of students engaging in such activities. Concerning the roles of students in other areas, the respondents of this survey found some valuable student activities in all three methodologies, but a higher percentage seemed to favor the roles of the students in CLT.

Also coded were three variables: years of teaching experience, whether the respondent was Saudi or non-Saudi, and academic degree. Concerning the first variable, responses to only five of the thirty statements showed a degree of variation. For GTM1, concerning the value of teaching vocabulary and structure, for GTM4, on the need to concentrate on reading and writing skills, and for GTM6, on the importance of paying attention to the similarities between the TL and the NL, those with 11-20+ years of teaching experience tended to disagree with each statement, while almost all of those with 1-10 years of teaching experience agreed with the same statements. For ALT3, on the necessity of mastering grammar, those with 11-20+ years of teaching experience tended to disagree with the statement, while those with below eleven years of teaching experience tended to agree with it. These 'younger' respondents, perhaps, are more aware of the decline of the views of Ferdinand de Saussure [34] who distinguished between the system of language (*la langue*) and its actual use (*la parole*). This represents their awareness of the latest shift of methodology to assert GTM. For CLT6, dealing with the need to accept errors in the classroom, almost all of those with ten or under years of experience disagreed with the statement, while all of those with more than 10 years of experience agreed or strongly agreed. Concerning the Saudi/non-Saudi variable, only one statement showed a noticeable disparity of response: GTM4. All Saudis taking a position agreed that reading and writing skills are important, while one-third of the non-Saudis disagreed with this position. Concerning academic degree, twelve of the respondents had the Ph.D. and five the M.A. There were no major differences in response between the Ph.D.s and M.A.s concerning any of the thirty statements. Overall, the last two coded variables were not significant in this study.

Conclusions and Implications

Smith and Renzulli [35, p. 49] confirm that a teacher who can "purposively exhibit a wide range of teaching styles is potentially able to accomplish more than a teacher whose repertoire is relatively limited." The subjects of this study appear to have considered well the approach and design principles of GTM, ALT, and CLT. This was to be expected since the subjects are university teachers of English in a small department of seventeen teachers which, because of its size, and the frequency of academic meetings and in-house seminars, would facilitate the exchange of ideas about EFL teaching and learning. The results of this study show that its subjects have not dogmatically adopted one methodology, but have considered the guiding principles of all three. This was primarily shown by the fact that, while most exhibited a proclivity toward CLT, they retained an emphasis on the grammatical accuracy of GTM and ALT because they are the trainers of future EFL teachers.

Other EFL programs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia may be neither so homogeneously structured, nor have such a small number of teachers. In such cases, this questionnaire, or a questionnaire similar to it, may be beneficial to their administrators and teachers; they may help their teachers develop an awareness of the processes by which language learning takes place and make this awareness accessible for future

action. One of the purposes of this paper has been to convince EFL administrators and teachers in the Kingdom that preferred teaching styles can be identified and modified, and that they should expose their teachers to the concept of pedagogical preference teacher- and program-evaluation. Of course, administrators should employ caution in using teacher preference assessment, diagnosis, and prescription. As Doyle and Rutherford [36] point out, there are many variables that affect ESL/EFL teaching: the nature of the learning task, the motivation of the learners, and the relationship between teacher and students. However, a teacher who is aware of his guiding teaching principles will be better able to deal with these variables.

Further research projects in EFL programs in the Kingdom, it is hoped, might attempt to replicate this study, using the pedagogical preference survey of this paper or a modification of it. A Kingdom-wide compilation of such research projects may have wide-ranging implications in the areas of EFL curriculum design, materials development, student orientation, and teacher training, particularly at the intermediate and secondary levels. Other future research might also relate to an assessment of the accuracy of teacher self-assessment through classroom observation; that is, do ESL/EFL teachers' pedagogical preferences manifest themselves in their classrooms? An attempt to gauge students' preferred teaching methodologies would also be valuable, especially since numerous studies in other countries are coming forward to show that students tend to prefer aspects of GTM and ALT over those of CLT [8; 37-39].

To conclude, there appear to be several valuable reasons for EFL programs in the Kingdom to initiate a policy of using pedagogical preference surveys. Moreover, teachers should have the opportunity to assess their own teaching style preferences, a process which might encourage them to diversify those preferences. As O'Driscoll [40] and Woods [41] argue, teachers need the opportunity to explore their beliefs and assumptions about language learning, and the language curricula should leave room for teachers to adapt these beliefs and assumptions to their individualized teaching styles. Secondly, pedagogical preference questionnaires can also spark teachers' discussion within an EFL program about alternate views of language learning and the implication for language pedagogy. Furthermore, teachers who have gone through a pedagogical preference process will be in a better position to evaluate feedback, to implement changes, and to improve in all aspects of teaching than those who lack self-evaluation skills. EFL programs need such self-evaluation, for as Millman [42, p. 12] writes, "Teaching is too important to too many to be conducted without a critical inquiry into its worth."

Appendix A: Questionnaire on Pedagogical Preference

General Instructions

Please read each statement carefully and circle the choice that best fits the degree to which you agree or disagree. Choose one answer only.

For your responses please use:

- SA (Strongly Agree), when you strongly agree with the statement;
- A (Agree), when you agree with the statement;
- U (Undecided), when you are uncertain about the answer;
- D (Disagree), when you disagree with the statement; and
- SD (Strongly Disagree), when you strongly disagree with the statement.

Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)

1. Students should concentrate on learning the structure and vocabulary of the target language.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
2. Finding equivalents in the native language for all words of the target language facilitates language learning.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
3. Attention should be paid to translating sentences from the target language into the native language.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
4. Classroom activities should concentrate on developing the reading and writing skills.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
5. Specific examination of grammatical rules is a useful classroom technique.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
6. Paying attention to similarities between the target language and the native language is important for language learning.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
7. Students should be able to translate from the native language into the target language and vice versa.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
8. The teacher is the principal source of correct answers in the classroom.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
9. Sometimes the native language should be used as the medium of instruction.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
10. A focus on meaning/content may prevent language students from developing grammatical accuracy.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|

Audiolingual Teaching (ALT)

1. Linguistic competence is more important to learning a language than meaningful communication.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
2. Repetition, substitution, transformation drills, and work with minimal pairs are essential in learning a language.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|

3. Mastering the grammar of the target language is a prerequisite to developing oral communication skills.

SA A U D SD

4. Linguistic accuracy and correct pronunciation of the target language should be sought.

SA A U D SD

5. Grammatical rules should be taught through examples and drills.

SA A U D SD

6. Errors should be avoided in language learning, and if they occur they must be corrected.

SA A U D SD

7. Audio teaching aids and teaching laboratories facilitate language learning.

SA A U D SD

8. Through modeling dialogs and conducting drills, the teacher is the major source of the correct pronunciation of the sounds of the target language.

SA A U D SD

9. There should be minimal use of the native language by both teachers and students in the language classroom.

SA A U D SD

10. Manipulating language should be emphasized more than understanding content.

SA A U D SD

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

1. Communicative competence and conversational skills are major goals of second language learning.

SA A U D SD

2. Games, chanting, and role play are classroom techniques which facilitate learning the target language.

SA A U D SD

3. Second language learning occurs when it is based on oral communicative activities.

SA A U D SD

4. Fluency, not accuracy, in the target language should be sought.

SA A U D SD

5. Direct teaching of grammar should be avoided.

SA A U D SD

6. During the early stages of second/foreign language acquisition, syntactic errors should be accepted as signs of development and they should not be corrected.

SA A U D SD

7. Students should predict, negotiate, and help each other to do a language learning task.

SA A U D SD

8. The principal role of the teacher is as a facilitator of learning.
- SA A U D SD
9. The target language should be used as a medium of instruction, but a little use of the native language may be permitted, if deemed helpful.
- SA A U D SD
10. Meaning should be emphasized in communicative activities.
- SA A U D SD

Demographic Information

Please answer the following questions by marking the choice that best fits your situation.

1. Are you a Saudi citizen?
- Yes No
2. How many years of experience in teaching English do you have?
- 1-3 years 3-5 years 5-10 years
- More than 11 years (please give number of years) _____ .

3. What is the highest degree you have?

Please mark the choice that matches your situation.

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Ph.D.
- Other (please specify) _____

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التحقق من الخيارات التدريسية لمعلمي الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المملكة العربية السعودية

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ملخص البحث. أثبتت الدراسات العلمية مؤخرًا أن مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية يكونون تصورات ونظريات شخصية عن تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وأن مصدر تلك التصورات والنظريات هو الممارسة اليومية للتدريس. وقد يترتب على ذلك فجوة ذات علاقة بطرق التدريس بين ما يعتقد المدرسون وما يتوقعه المشرفون على تنفيذ برامج تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية ومؤلفي الكتب الدراسية. لهذا السبب، ينبغي على المسؤولين عن تلك البرامج أن يعرفوا طرق التدريس التي يفضلها ويستخدمها مدرسوهم. وتقدم هذه الدراسة استبانة تستخدم كمعيار لمعرفة اختيارات مدرس اللغة فيما يتعلق بطرق التدريس. وقد استخدمها الباحث لمعرفة الاتجاهات المتعلقة بطرق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية عند سبعة عشر مدرسًا من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في إحدى الجامعات السعودية. أوضحت نتائج هذا البحث أن طريقة التدريس التي تركز على مهارة التخاطب في اللغة الإنجليزية هي الأكثر شيوعًا، كما أن الطريقتين الأخريين وهما طريقة تعليم المهارات السمعية - النطقية وطريقة القواعد والترجمة، مستخدمتان أيضًا ولكن بمعدل أقل من الطريقة الأولى.