

*In the Name of Allah, the Most  
Gracious and the Most Merciful*



**URMIA UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF LITERATURE AND HUMANITIES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**MA Thesis Entitled**

On the Practicality and Effectiveness of a Personalized Eclectic Method  
Incorporated into Iranian High School EFL Syllabus

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching

**By:**

Masoumeh Samadi

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Sima Modirkhameneh

**December, 2012**

Reference No: .....

Graduation Date: .....

**To the Graduate Council of Urmia University:**

Hereby we are submitting a thesis written by **Masoumeh Samadi** entitled “**On the Practicality and Effect of a Personalized Eclectic Method Incorporated into Iranian High School EFL Syllabus**” We have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT).

---

**Dr. Sima Modirkhameneh**

Thesis Supervisor

As examining body, we have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

---

**Dr. Javad Gholami**

External Examiner

---

**Dr. Karim Sadeghi**

Internal Examiner

---

**Dr. Bahman Nozhat**

Representative from

Post-graduate Council of Urmia University

# *Dedicated to*

*My Parents and my brother  
For their never ending support and  
everlasting love*

*&*

*My dear supervisor*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a great pleasure to thank everyone who helped me write my dissertation successfully whom I would like to show my gratitude to.

I am truly indebted and heartily grateful to my dear professor, **Dr. Sima Modirkhameneh** for her support and guidance during the planning and development of this research work. Her willingness to give her time so generously has been very much appreciated. I am sure it would have not been possible without her prompt feedbacks, constructive suggestions, insightful and valuable comments, and kindly and continuous support.

My special thanks go to **Dr. Gholami** for his inspiring and thoughtful contributions which pushed me along and encouraged me throughout my MA. studies. His special respect for creativity in teaching and honorable sense of commitment to his work provoked me in improving my personality as a teacher.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to my dear professors **Dr. Sadeghi, Dr. Alaviniya,** and **Dr. Jalali** for their generous support during my studies in Urmia University. I owe gratitude to them for my academic achievement.

I am also obliged to my dear friend and colleague **Mrs Fatemeh Alipur** whose kind cooperation in data collection phase helped me in completing this project.

Last, but by no means least, I thank **my parents** and **my brother** for their encouragements and support throughout my life, especially in preparing this investigation.

Needless to say, the positions taken and any shortcomings that may remain are of course my very own responsibility.

## ABSTRACT

**Thesis Title: On the Practicality and Effect of a personalized Eclectic Method Incorporated into Iranian High School EFL Syllabus**

With the growing speed of language teaching innovations, particularly the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), many language schools rethinking their pedagogy have been updated to incorporate communicative activities, and personalized context into their traditional practices. However, Iranian high schools were slow in this regard. Hence, the overarching aim of the present study was to take a step in bridging the gap between the theoretical teaching novelties and their practical realization in high schools. In this respect, framed under an eclectic framework, the present study was set out to explore the practicality and effect of incorporating personalized communicative principles, especially communicative activities to the already existing traditional high school syllabus. To this end, 240 participants aged 15-18 from 3 intact school grades (i.e., grade 1, 2, & 3) were assigned into 6 experimental and control groups to grant the study a quasi-experimental design. Prior to the treatment, 3 reliable tests based on school syllabus were administered for every distinct level for homogeneity purposes. Experimental participants, then, received ten one-hour-and-a-half-long sessions of instruction during which some applicable communicative activities were incorporated to the traditional exercises found in the high school EFL textbooks to devise not a new method in its strict sense but an eclectic one enhancing communicative competence. Moreover, to chase experimental groups' possible change of attitude in reaction to the treatment, through a multi-method, data was elicited through Gardner's (1985) Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (administered both prior and after the treatment) together with semi-structured interviews; thereby, quantitative data was supported by the qualitative data to provide more reliable results. A series of *t*-test analyses of both reliable tailor-made post-tests and AMTB yielded significant results, favoring the study's proposed approach. Increased motivation and positive attitudes toward the study's specific approach were among the other outcomes. The findings would feed into classroom practice encouraging both teachers and students to welcome communicative principles to create more fruitful and interesting high school EFL classes.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Communicative activities, Eclectic method, High school EFL learners, High school EFL syllabus, Personalization.

**For correspondence with the researcher:**

**E-mail:** [samadi.masoum@yahoo.com](mailto:samadi.masoum@yahoo.com)

**Publications and conference presentations based on this thesis:**

Modirkhameneh, S. & Samadi, M. (2012). On the effect of an eclectic method incorporated into Iranian high school EFL syllabus. Paper presented at 10<sup>th</sup> TELLSI Conference, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.

Modirkhameneh, S. & Samadi, M. (2013). Iranian female high school EFL learners' perception of communicative activities incorporated to their textbooks. Paper accepted for presentation at Second National Conference on Language, Discourse and Pragmatics (LPD), Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran.

Modirkhameneh, S. & Samadi, M. (in press). Personalizing the teaching of reading and vocabulary through the diglot-weave technique. *Folio*, 15 (2).

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>xiii</b>

## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	4
1.3 Significance of the study.....	7
1.4 Research questions and hypotheses.....	10
1.5 Definition of key words.....	12
1.6 Organization of the thesis.....	15

## **CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

2.1 Introduction.....	17
2.2 An overview of second language teaching methods .....	18
2.2.1 <i>The Grammar-Translation Method</i> .....	18
2.2.2 <i>The Direct Method</i> .....	19
2.2.3 <i>The Audio-lingual Method</i> .....	21
2.2.4 <i>The Oral Approach or Situational Language Teaching (SLT)</i> .....	22
2.2.5 <i>Total Physical Response (TPR)</i> .....	24
2.2.6 <i>The Silent Way</i> .....	25
2.2.7 <i>Community Language Learning (CLL)</i> .....	25



2.2.8 <i>The Natural Approach</i> .....	26
2.2.9 <i>Suggestopedia</i> .....	27
2.3 Communicative Language teaching (CLT).....	28
2.3.1 <i>A historical perspective</i> .....	29
2.3.2 <i>Defining communicative competence</i> .....	31
2.3.3 <i>Definitions and principles of CLT</i> .....	34
2.3.4 <i>Classroom activities in CLT</i> .....	42
2.3.5 <i>Challenges in implementing communicative language teaching in EFL contexts</i> .....	47
2.4 Post method era.....	55
2.4.1 <i>Method vs. Post-method</i> .....	58
2.4.2 <i>Eclecticism</i> .....	60
2.5 An overview of language teaching methodologies in Iran.....	64
2.5.1 <i>Teaching English in public schools</i> .....	65
2.5.2 <i>Teaching English in private institutes</i> .....	66
2.5.3 <i>Demerits of high school curriculum</i> .....	68
2.6 Chapter Summary.....	80
<b>CHAPTER III: METHOD</b>	
3.1 Introduction.....	82
3.2 Design of the study.....	83
3.3 Participants.....	83
3.4 Instruments.....	85
3.4.1 <i>Pre-tests</i> .....	85
3.4.2 <i>Attitude/Motivation Test Battery</i> .....	86
3.4.3 <i>Semi-structured interview</i> .....	86

3.4.4 Recordings.....	87
3.4.5 EFL text books.....	87
3.4.6 Materials utilized for running the incorporated activities.....	88
3.4.7 Post-tests.....	88
3.5 Procedure.....	89
3.5.1 Context of the study.....	88
3.5.2 The procedure followed in the control group.....	91
3.5.3 The procedure implemented for the experimental group.....	92
3.5.4 Scoring procedure .....	103
3.6 Data analysis.....	104

## **CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

4.1 Introduction.....	105
4.2 Results.....	106
4.2.1 Research question 1 .....	107
4.2.2 Quantitative data analysis (data analysis for research questions 2, 3, 4, and 5).....	109
4.2.3 Qualitative data analysis.....	127
4.3 Discussion.....	131
4.3.1 Eclectic nature of the study.....	132
4.3.2 Personalization view of the study.....	134
4.3.3 Results of the experimental phase.....	138
4.3.4 Participants' perception.....	140
4.4 Chapter summary.....	145

## **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Introduction.....	147
5.2 Implications of the study.....	145
5.3 Limitations.....	151
5.4 Suggestions for further research.....	153
5.5 Conclusion and final remarks.....	154

<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>157</b>
------------------------	------------

<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>165</b>
----------------------	------------

<b>چکیده .....</b>	<b>215</b>
--------------------	------------

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Components of Language Competence (adapted from Brown, 2007).....	33
Table 2.2	Vietnamese teachers' emphasis on CLT and traditional approaches (Adapted from Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006a).....	46
Table 2.3	An outline of EFL instruction in Iranian public schools.....	66
Table 3.1	Descriptive statistics: Participants' profile.....	84
Table 3.2	Additional techniques and activities incorporated to different parts of the book.....	94
Table 4.1	Grade 1 participants' post-test results (experimental vs. control).....	109
Table 4.2	Independent-sample <i>t</i> -test (grade 1 participants' post-test results).....	110
Table 4.3	Grade 2 participants' post-test results (experimental vs. control).....	112
Table 4.4	Independent-samples <i>t</i> -test (grade 2 participants' post-test results).....	113
Table 4.5	Grade 3 participants' post-test results (experimental vs. control).....	115
Table 4.6	Independent-sample <i>t</i> -test (grade 3 participants' post-test results).....	116
Table 4.7	Experimental participants' AMTB results in time 1 and 2 (all grades).....	118
Table 4.8	Paired-samples <i>t</i> -test (all grades experimental participants' AMTB results).....	119
Table 4.9	Grade 1 experimental participants' AMTB results in time 1 and 2.....	121
Table 4.10	Paired-samples <i>t</i> -test (grade 1 experimental participants' AMTB results).....	121
Table 4.11	Grade 2 experimental participants' AMTB results in time 1 and 2.....	123
Table 4.12	Paired-samples <i>t</i> -test (grade 2 experimental participants' AMTB results).....	123
Table 4.13	Grade 3 experimental participants' AMTB results in time 1 and 2.....	125
Table 4.14	Paired-samples <i>t</i> -test (grade 3 experimental participants' AMTB results).....	125

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1	Board game (adapted from Chung, 2005).....	100
Figure 4.1	Mean comparison of post-tests: Grade 1.....	111
Figure 4.2	Mean comparison of post-tests: Grade 2.....	115
Figure 4.3	Mean comparison of post-test results: Grade 3.....	117
Figure 4.4	All grades experimental participants' mean comparison of AMTB.....	120
Figure 4.5	Grade 1 experimental participants' mean comparison of AMTB.....	122
Figure 4.6	Grade 2 experimental participants' mean comparison of AMTB.....	124
Figure 4.7	Grade 3 experimental participants' mean comparison of AMTB.....	126

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AMTB</b>	Attitude/Motivation Test Battery
<b>CLL</b>	Community Language Learning
<b>CLT</b>	Communicative Language Teaching
<b>DVD</b>	Digital Versatile Disk
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>ELT</b>	English Language Teaching
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>ESP</b>	English for Specific Purposes
<b>GTM</b>	Grammar Translation Method
<b>IELTS</b>	International English Language Testing System
<b>ILI</b>	Iran Language Institute
<b>L2</b>	Second Language
<b>M.A</b>	Master of Arts
<b>ME</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>PPP</b>	Presentation Practice Production
<b>SLT</b>	Second Language Teaching
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<b>TBI</b>	Task-based Instruction
<b>TBLT</b>	Task-based Language Teaching
<b>TEFL</b>	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
<b>TOEFL</b>	Test of English as a Foreign Language
<b>TPR</b>	Total Physical Response

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The last decade has witnessed a rapid increase in interest in multilingualism (Jessner, 2008) since language learning in general and foreign language learning in particular is a necessity nowadays. In this respect, the paramount importance of English, among other languages, as an international language (Crystal, 1997) in a world with such a rapid development entails the employment of new methodologies fostering language learning as rapidly as possible. Meanwhile, English has become one of the compulsory courses in the educational system of many countries including Iran. English assumes a pivotal role in the Iranian educational system (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006a). Iranian school curriculum, in this regard, offers seven years of English studies: 3 years of English studies in junior high school, 3 years in senior high school, and one more year in pre-university stage. There are also private institutes all over the country which offer intensive English courses.

A glance through the literature reveals a shift of attention from purely linguistic methods to more communicative approaches (Brown, 2001). This is the result of inefficiencies of traditional methods and instructions in promoting learners' acquisition. With the rise of new methods in teaching English, communicative approaches gained popularity in search for 'communicative competence' (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In line with this historical turning point in language teaching, Iranian scholars following their foreign counterparts, rethinking their teaching pedagogy, have been taking some steps to keep up with these new trends. There have been two distinct movements, in this respect: one being the radical and speedy action taken by the institutes in response to the new findings and challenges in language teaching, and the other the high school EFL (English as a Foreign Language) courses highly influenced with the theories of Audio-lingual method. Delving into their practice, a passerby would understand that in comparison to schools, institutes

seem to achieve significant results in their attempt to survive in the everyday growing world of methodology. Today, no one questions the success of institutes in their path. A very clear support for this claim is a simple comparison of a learner exposed to English only through school curriculum and the one studying English in an institute as well. However, there also exist inefficiencies in institutes' works in pursuing purely communicative approaches in a radical shift which Fotos and Nassaji (as cited in Safdari, 2011) have found inadequate for higher levels of language accuracy. In other words, though a communicative approach helps learners to become fluent, it is inefficient to insure comparable levels of accuracy (Ellis, 2001). It seems that the two movements in Iran are taking two extreme poles, one highly form-focused in its strict sense and the other influenced by communicative approach, disregarding forms of language, has taken up the meaning-driven view. As a result, there arose a crucial need for integration of meaning-focused and form-focused instructions.

With the emergence of post method era, the concept of method has been seriously questioned. Thereby, scholars began to argue about the limitations of single methods. Thus, "the new millennium has brought new challenges as well as new opportunities for the profession to venture beyond method" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.161).

In light of this shift to post method era, teachers and practitioners began to seek a procedure to integrate benefits of each single method of teaching, and reap those benefits to form a unified approach to language teaching that is no longer characterized by a series of methods (Brown, 2001). As Kumaravadivelu (2006), however, warns out, the so called approach should not ignore the creativity and cognition of the teacher in confronting diversity of learners and their contexts which were overlooked by method. In order, therefore, to mend the misleading concept, 'method' gave way to 'syllabus' with eclectic methods popping up to suggest integration of different syllabuses while taking into account the specificity of different contexts. Clearly, contextual specifications is one of the factors at work in influencing teachers' perception of situation and their method of



teaching (Feryok, 2008). Likewise, it has been recognized that Western methods may not be readily transferred to non-Western state school settings (Halliday as cited in Feryok, 2008; Roa, 2002). That is to say, there should be a room for personalized approaches adaptable to specific contexts which lead teachers to “both new practices and new understanding of old practices” (Feryok, 2008, p. 237).

This approach is recommended by many scholars such as Roa (2002), who advocating personalization of methods to make them adjustable to specific contexts, suggest that EFL countries need to modernize not westernize, to combine ‘new’ with ‘old’ in order to align the communicative approach with traditional teaching structures. In line with Roa and in support of his findings, İnceçay and İnceçay (2009) also agreed that only by reconciling communicative activities with non-communicative ones students in non-English speaking countries can benefit from CLT (Communicative Language Teaching). In fact, they suggest for reconsideration of at-use pedagogy while warning out of the consequences of a radical shift in adopting not adapting recent approaches.

In this respect, a critical perspective on the status quo of English language teaching in Iran as a country in which English is considered a foreign language raises important questions regarding the applicability of approaches, methods, and techniques developed by second language acquisition scholars who are English native speakers. There seems to be social and interpersonal as well as psychological dimensions to acquisition; so, decisions about teaching methods, classroom activities, and materials selection must take into account the differences in various contexts. Thus, from the hermeneutic perspective, language scholars and practitioners should be open to modification of their own theories as to personalize what is best for the particular context in which they are teaching (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006b).

In this regard, the present study was an attempt to integrate the two rather elusive concepts of form and meaning (communicative and non-communicative) with the aim of adapting it to the EFL syllabus offered by high school curriculum; through this, it is sought to possibly reap the benefits of both instructions. Furthermore, the study attempted to employ a personalized eclectic method which caters for the realities of high school classes in general and the specific situation of the participants of this study in particular.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Among the most referred contextual factors influencing language teaching procedure is the institutional pressure or, to put it in Richards' (2002) words, the "influences from corporate sectors" (p. 6) which can lead teachers to use practices other than what their cognition and ideas are about language teaching. Another main factor in this regard is the influence of textbooks which, confining teachers' creativity, limits their view (Azizfar, Koosha, & Lotfi, 2010; Carless, 2003; Chung, 2005; Dahmardeh, 2009). These factors, though important, are just one side of the wide arena of teaching. Unfortunately, this is the common belief among Iranian teachers to blame school textbooks and to refer to their shortcomings as the main reason for unsatisfactory situation of EFL in school curriculum which impedes language teaching methods to move beyond Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and at best Audio-lingual one (Traditional Methods). However, previous studies emphasize the importance of teachers' positive cognitions on their practice. For instance, Feryok (2008) reports an Armenian English language teacher's practical theory of Communicative Language Teaching and how her cognition and definition of language learning and teaching, though in some rare occasions being in inconsistency, helped her in conducting a communicative class. His study does offer a fairly close look at how a teacher in a non-Western state school is able to put her cognitions about CLT into practice. "The teacher's perception of her success in light of limited resources and limiting constraints shows how sensitivity to a particular context may provide knowledge about implementing and maintaining a balanced approach" (Feryok, 2008, p. 236).

In line with the growing desire for CLT practices, in recent decades, teachers of foreign languages in many countries have been encouraged and recommended to apply its principles. “The communicative approach could be said to be the product of educators and linguists who had grown dissatisfied with the Audio-lingual and Grammar Translation Methods of foreign language instruction” (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006a, p. 341). This approach, advocating the development of communicative competence, has also been welcomed by English language teaching curriculum and syllabus designers of Iran (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006a). In spite of this breakthrough, Razmjoo and Riazi (2006a) probing high school and institute teachers’ attitudes toward CLT, have found that, though having a positive view, among the participants, only the teachers of the institutes practice a quasi-CLT type of approach in their classes. They also found that the most significant footprint of this practice in institutes is only the emphasis on pair work; while, other elements including dialogues, reading, grammar, and vocabulary are not integrated in an interactive way. DordiNejad, Ashouri, Hakimi, Mosavi, and Atri (2011) report two main reasons for this gap between communicative curriculum and its implementation in Iran. The first important reason is reported to be the misconception perceived by Iranian teachers which lead them to define CLT as “a method including conversations without grammar teaching” (p.1761). Another significant reason discussed is the learners’ cultural background; Iranians generally are dependent learners who seek teachers’ accuracy in correcting them and prefer explicit teaching of grammar.

The primary observations and interviews with some of the teachers by the researcher herself revealed that students studying in institutes have problems with grammar of language since CLT implemented in institutes does not equip them with enough direct grammatical knowledge. Baleghizadeh (2010) reporting on the effects and advantages of formal instruction, points out that among the major problems with language teaching approaches which emphasize meaningful communication, the first one is overlooking language forms. These findings lend support to the researcher’s investigation of institute learners’ preference to receive explicit teaching of grammar. While institutes ignore this need, high school English courses offer language teaching as mostly emphasized on

grammar. These two extremes leading to dissatisfactory results in one way or another, highlight the need for an eclectic method of teaching integrating the positive points of both CLT and traditional approaches (See the definition in section 1.5) to possibly overcome the shortcomings of each.

In this regard and in an attempt to cope with the already existing paradox raised by the two above mentioned extreme movements in schools and in institutes, the question of whether there is any way out of this problem motivated the researcher in conducting the current research. As a high school teacher, and having observed and taught in high school classes, the researcher has found that the methodology applied in high school classes is generally and for the most a mixture of Grammar Translation Method and Audio-lingual Method. In fact, the methodology applied in Iranian high school English courses, generally, at its best does not move beyond the Audio-lingual Method; students are passive learners and teachers have the authority with a preconceived negative notion of the textbooks. The dissatisfactory results of English high school classes are often viewed as the inefficiency of the textbooks. High school EFL textbooks are based on a structural syllabus which mostly focuses on explicit teaching of grammar. Without doubt Iranian high school English textbooks are not appropriate in terms of meeting students' needs (See e.g., Jahangard, 2007; Razmjoo, 2007; Allami, Jalilifar, Hashemian, & Shooshtari, 2009; Dahmardeh, 2009; Azizfar, Koosha, & Lotfi, 2010; Meshkat, & Hassani, 2011). So far, they have been critically evaluated and no one thinks of questioning this fact. There have been requests and attempts on the part of the teachers and authorities to have the available books revised and improved which, in turn, have resulted in thorough revision of the pre-university books (See Yarmohamadi, 2002). However, in fact, any revision is not enough as long as the teachers' views are not changed (Feryok, 2008). Text book is just one part of the problem. In our studies and through the experience, we have learned and heard that material is something and its implementation is something else (See for example (Ghorbani, 2009); that a structural textbook can be taught communicatively depending on the teacher's view and cognition of teaching and learning.