

“The Communicative Methods of Teaching English Language Skills”: Challenges to implement the methods in EFL classes

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Abstract: *Currently almost all non-english speaking countries are opt for learning and teaching the English language not solely primary schools but also higher education in order to keep in harmony with the outside world as this language has been dominant in virtually the whole globe for many years. Therefore, teaching English in Uzbekistan has been experiencing various changes in the last few decades. That's why most educational institutions need certain approaches and methods to teach English normally throughout the world. Having said that, it is not a secret that some kind of these institutions have been coming across some difficulties in either choosing the correct approaches or how to implement them during the lessons. This article will cover why these challenges may occur while teaching in EFL classes. To gather enough data, multi-methodological approach of quantitative survey and qualitative interview are used and some challenges are revealed that rural EFL teachers have encountered when implementing CLT in their classrooms. These include students' lack of cognitive resources, the rural setting because of geographical and socio-economic constraints and lack of skilled teachers.*

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), multi-methodological approach, communicative competence, implementation, survey, qualitative interview, challenges.

Introduction

It's not a secret that throughout centuries almost all countries have been using a wide variety of approaches to learn or to teach a particular language for certain purposes. In fact, humankind tried to use some methods like direct, audio-lingual, grammar-translation, cognitive, reading and communicative approach at some stages of life. At first, communicative language teaching approach seems to help learners use a language for meaningful communication, connect people together, love other nations and cultures with a good use of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in authentic materials or role-playing since it first emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. “To catch up with the fast growing global economy, and increase in the number of effective English-communication learners, including many Asian countries, with the recognition of the English language as an international communication tool, have reformed their English education within the past two decades” (Littlewood, 2007). To implement this approach effectively also, in our country, there have been demand for enough skilled teachers: “Admittedly, while learning a foreign language, teachers physical existence plays an important role to make sure that students are learning properly” (R. Ne'matov, 2020, 76p).

In spite of these attempts, it's known that there's a major problem with lack of skilled teachers in Uzbekistan. New English teaching techniques aiming at “teaching English for effective and appropriate communication” have been adopted by the government. Since then, the English language has been used as a foreign language at schools and communicative approach has been used as the main technique of teaching which is led by non-native English teachers. Actually, the CLT movement started here at the beginning of twenty first century, educational movements highlighting ‘practical English’ were generated to increase learners’ oral communication ability in order to help students feel themselves the functional users rather than knowledge accumulators of English. But stil, there are some challenges that are waiting for being overcome: the most visible problem is lack of experienced teachers, as mentioned above and less interest in language by pupils. This is partly due to geographical and socio-economic confinement because as can be clearly seen that state-of-the-art equipments aren't readily available for introducing CLT to the lessons in remote rural areas.

Methodology

As my ultimate goal is to carry out a clear research concerning teachers’ difficulties in both implementing and practicing CLT while teaching English, the study makes good use of a mixed-method approach because a quantitative approach generally provides us with a wide vivid view that controls statistically the bias and external factors of the phenomena studied. By contrast, various sources that waa gathered through qualitative approach allows us to know closely about a deeper understanding. In fact, “the hybrid use of quantitative and qualitative approaches increases validity and gives more insights” (Shu-Hsiu Huang, 2016). A questionnaire entitled “Teachers’ challenges in using CLT in the classrooms” adapted from me at a public school in Khatyrchi district, Navoi, Uzbekistan. It was divided into two major parts. Finding one contained questions relevant to the subject’s

background information, including age, education degree, years of teaching, grade level teaching. Finding two was statements about difficulties rural teachers encountered for their CLT implementation.

The Interview method. "Interviews are the best way of learning about people's interior experiences and how they perceive and interpret their perceptions, affected by their thoughts and feelings about a particular event" (Weiss, 1994). Vivid description of interview and narrating process explained in a detailed way by the subjects are well transferred to this article (rural CLT practice in this study) for much more authentic scientific explanations in order to grab the whole meaning of the phenomena described. In this research, the interviews were conducted in Uzbek language as as to give an access to have adequate freedom for interviewed teachers to feel themselves free and speak fluently to the questions prepared. Each interview lasted 15 to maximum 20 minutes. The whole process was recorded in order that I could sort out the data collected. The interview process was translated into English later on and sent to supervisor for analysis purpose. The interview questions mainly focus on the open face-to-face interview questions. They are about descriptive scenarios on teachers' general views on CLT, the development of students' capabilities and understanding of CLT and actual classroom teaching tools, and the difficulties resulted from their CLT practice.

Results

The research was conducted at school N24, located in Navoi region. There was no selection process for interview since at this school only eight teachers teach English and they are qualified for other languages, some of whose major aren't English at all. The research greatly paid attention to the teachers' perception about practising CLT, challenges encountered during the lessons. This interview could assist to reveal the real condition of current CLT usage in EFL classes and this can lead us to know about the weakness of the approach and potential solutions, as well. All of the interviewed teachers claimed that the cultivation of students' communication skills is really crucial. All of them admitted that CLT has a distinctive power in terms of teaching English and teachers practise CLT activities when there is enough time to fulfill CLT, most of the teachers (6 out of 7 interviewees) are opt for conducting a semi-traditional teaching approach – a mixture of two main teaching approaches, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Grammar Translation Methods (GTM)

Finding 1 reveals participants' background information, including age, education degree, years of teaching, grade level teaching:

	Participants' name	Age	Teaching experience	Teaching grades	Qualification (according to diploma)
1	Khaydarova Lobar	39	15	9-11 grades	French
2	Kholikulova Dilafruz	38	16	7-11 grades	Spain
3	Kuchqorova Khurriyat	37	13	7-10 grades	French
4	Umrzokova Makhfuza	33	9	1-4 grades	English
5	Bozorova Surayyo	32	7	1-4 grades	English
6	Rakhmonova Shakhzoda	27	4	5-6 grades	English
7	Ergasheva Ezoza	25	3	5-6 grades	English

Finding 2 is about how these rural teachers practise CLT and difficulties they encountered for their CLT implementation.

	How often they use CLT	Difficulties resulted from CLT practice
1	Actually, I used different teaching methods for different units and parts but in every lesson CLT should be used.	students' low first language cognitive resources; Disturbed environment of the class.
2	I don't just use a single method. Using CLT depends on the theme	Students' low English proficiency;

		Student's 'communication' problems
3	A CLT activity may be good for sentence practice and GTM works for reading, so I try to use both above.	Students' lack of learning motivation; Parents' attitude toward English learning and CLT
4	If the lesson includes interactive games, CLT is best way to use but sometimes we avoid it due to lack of resources.	Teachers' English proficiency and Lack of in-service training; Limited teaching resource
5	I start the lesson with CLT to improve communication among pupils as much as possible.	Classroom management problem; Class agenda problems
6	I cannot use it every time since the class consists of too many pupils owing to lack of English teachers. It may be too noisy if it's used regularly.	CLT textbooks and standardized paper-based tests; A large number of students in the classroom
7	I try to use it despite pupils' less interest and lack of modern tools as it's best method to use.	Students disturbed the class; Using other languages in the classrooms.

Discussion

The data collected and the interview make it clear that all the participants who were involved in the investigation consider communicative approach of teaching as one of the most fruitful methods to improve communication among pupils in the classroom. That's why, almost all of them are willing to practise CLT in each lesson in spite of the fact that there is short of modern technologies and equipments. Yet, they confirmed that either financial constraints make using CLT somewhat impossible or pupils themselves have less interest in learning a language or disrupt the lesson in remote rural areas. Moreover, according to the interviewed teachers, there are a large number of pupils being taught during the lessons. This is mostly because schools in remote areas still need qualified EFL teachers. As they mentioned, it was difficult to implement CLT to the lessons that included too many pupils in one go as it would lead to unmanageable condition, noisy or mess. "Often", according to one of the interviewees "there is no definite texts or grammar rules are not presented, and classroom arrangement is nonstandard. Pupils are likely to interact primarily with each other during the lessons rather than with their teachers". Because of less communicative skills in target language, they are expected to use their mother tongue.

Conclusion

As far as I'm concerned, during the CLT practice, rural teachers in Uzbekistan encountered different difficulties resulted from themselves, pupils, parents or school system. From both observation and interview, this study reveals that all participants encountered various difficulties in teaching English with using speaking or communicative ability. The most common challenges faced by the teachers were pupils' less interest to the lesson and limited teaching resources and also 'being afraid of making mistakes' is one of the reasons of problem which hindered them to speak. What's more, according to the findings on the challenges that were experienced in the use of CLT, the research uncovered that time and class agenda cause trouble to apply CLT. These, along with the large classes, curb the teachers' action and ability to involve learners in meaningful role-playing activities. I would suggest that other researchers who are keen to conduct a research on a similar topic should take into account classroom observation for the witness of rural teachers' actual CLT practice and data collection. There are numerous interesting researches concerning rural areas-related teaching process waiting for further investigation.

References

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