Assessing the Impact of Communicative Language Teaching at CGU Polytechnic

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Research Paper **Keywords :** *Communicative Language Teaching, Communicative Competence, Speaking skills, Listening skills*	English language teachers and educators all over the world are constantly seeking improved language approaches, methods, theories, techniques, and strategies. They implement these practices in their classrooms to determine their effectiveness, benefit their students, and make a greater impact. These communicative language education techniques have been employed in various nations for many years. The ultimate objective for learners is to achieve communicative competence, so they continuously explore methods and approaches that can significantly enhance their language skills. Teachers and students try out various language methods and techniques to improve student's language skills. This study aims to investigate how implementing the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach at CGU Polytechnic affects student's listening and speaking abilities. Data was collected through the observation sheets. Few students and a teacher were taken as the participants for this research. The results indicate that incorporating CLT in the classroom has a positive impact on the learner's listening and speaking skills.

Introduction

The history of ELT shows the development of different types of approaches and methods as a response to meet the demands of English language teaching and learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Modern methods of English language teaching have replaced traditional and outdated approaches to overcome challenges that hinder effective language learning and application. In the past, Grammar translation methods primarily focused on writing skills with little to no emphasis on listening or speaking skills in the second language. Thus this method was unable to achieve the ultimate goal, that is, communicative competence. The direct method emerged as a response to the grammar translation method. It was founded on the belief that learners of a foreign or second language should think directly in English. This method discourages translation and instead emphasizes conveying meanings through actions, demonstrations, or real objects. It prioritizes thinking, discussing, and conversing directly in the second language. (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). It failed as a method because there were no adequate number of native speakers to teach the second language and also authentic materials were not used.

The Structural- Oral- Situational (SOS) method was developed from the 1930s to the 1960s by British applied linguists such as C.C Fries, Harold Palmer and A.S. Hornsby. This approach incorporates many of the techniques used in the direct method, but it also recognizes the importance of developing listening and speaking skills. It mainly focuses on oral practice, grammar and sentence patterns. "The SOS approach faced criticism for being more appropriate for younger students" (Najaraj,14). The repetitive teaching of structures made the learning environment monotonous and uninteresting. Additionally, it overlooked the development of reading and writing skills, and there was a shortage of qualified teachers. (Sharma, 2011). The Notional- functional Approach to language teaching has its roots from a non-school environment. This approach is based on the language needed to express the functions and the language needed to express certain ideas/ notions. It clearly focused on the listening and speaking skills neglecting the reading and writing skills.

In the previous language teaching methods, there was a belief that they were not effective in helping students communicate because they lacked context. Students were not learning the language in a realistic and comprehensive way, as the traditional methods did not incorporate social norms, gestures, and expressions. It became evident that context is crucial in language teaching. As a result, advocates of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) proposed a shift towards developing student's "Communicative Competence." Communicative competence refers to the ability to effectively communicate in a target language. It involves not just knowing the language itself but also understanding how to use it appropriately in different contexts to convey meaning accurately and

appropriately. This means integrating all the components of communication, including linguistic, sociocultural, strategic, and discourse competence. In the classroom, this shift involves moving away from solely presenting grammatical rules and instead engaging students in communication activities such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These activities encompass all components of communicative competence, ensuring a well-rounded language learning experience.

Throughout the history of teaching English as a second or foreign language, teachers mainly focused on having learners memorize and repeat language structures without exposing them to real-life situations. However, these methods were not effective in helping English language learners communicate effectively in different real-life situations using the target language. For example, if a learner had to speak the target language, that is English, outside of the classroom scenario then the learner gets nervous and is not able to speak effectively as the learner never really got any practice regarding the same. McKay (2006) states that listening and speaking skills are the foundations of language learning that formulate oral language. It is important to introduce new trends in English language teaching by incorporating authentic materials and meaningful tasks that reflect real-world scenarios. This approach will enhance the learner's abilities to apply the target language that they are learning to situations beyond the classroom.

Literature Review

The research paper 'The Discussion of Communicative Language Teaching Approach in Language Classrooms' by Luis Miguel Dos Santos (2020) talks about the best ways to teach English in classrooms. It emphasizes the importance of using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which is considered one of the most effective methods in language teaching. The paper suggests that teachers should choose teaching strategies and methodologies that suit their students' needs and expectations. By personalizing the approach and considering factors like learning styles and preferences, teachers can create a more engaging and effective learning environment. This can lead to better academic outcomes for the students.

In the paper 'Communicative Language Teaching' by Sojuangon Rambe (2017), the researcher argues that the primary objective of language teaching should be to help students develop their ability to communicate effectively. This means going beyond just grammar and focusing on building "Communicative Competence." It involves integrating all language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with cultural and social aspects of communication. By doing so, learners can

confidently use the language in real-life situations. Jack C. Richards (2006) emphasizes that language ability goes beyond just knowing grammar rules. The slogan "language as communication" highlights the importance of teaching language in a way that reflects its use in society. The goal is to prepare students to effectively communicate and interact with others in everyday situations.

Hysen Kasumi (2015) in the paper ' Communicative Language Teaching and its Impact on Student's Performance' takes a deep dive into how the Communicative Language Teaching method is being utilized in schools in Kosovo. According to Harmer (2003), the method is essentially the practical application of the approach, where decisions are made regarding teaching actions, the roles of teachers and students, the materials used, and how the syllabus is organized. Kasumi's main objective was to assess the impact of CLT on students' performance and motivation, with a particular focus on its benefits compared to more traditional teaching methods. Innovative approaches like CLT can revolutionize language learning and create a more engaging and interactive classroom environment.

Despite the growing popularity of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in language education, there has been no impact study made at CGU Polytechnic, although CLT has been implemented therefore this paper examines its effectiveness and suitability at CGU Polytechnic. Through this work we gather important information that will make language teaching and learning at CGU Polytechnic even better.

By conducting a comprehensive assessment of the impact of CLT at CGU Polytechnic, we hope to identify the strengths and weaknesses of this teaching approach in relation to the specific needs and characteristics of the students and the institution. This research highlights the need for an in-depth investigation of the effectiveness of CLT at CGU Polytechnic, shedding light on its potential benefits, limitations, and areas for improvement.

Communicative competence is essential at CGU Polytechnic because it helps students effectively communicate in English, both academically and professionally. It allows students to express themselves clearly, engage in discussions, present their ideas, and interact with others in a meaningful way. Developing communicative competence at the university is expected to prepare the students for success in their future careers where strong communication skills are highly required.

Findings and Discussion

The researcher first interviews the teacher to gain knowledge regarding his/her teaching style. With teacher's permission the researcher observed a few classes in the Polytechnic department. While observing, the researcher keeps the following questions in mind:

1. How much time does a student get to speak and listen?
2. Are the students comfortable in speaking?
3. What are the different types of activities or the methodology that the teacher uses?

The researcher notes that the teacher uses the Grammar Translation method to teach the students. The teacher explains everything in the mother tongue and gives rigorous practice on grammar. The learner applies the rules of grammar in translating the sentences or texts from the mother tongue into the target language. A lot of importance is given to completeness of sentences and accuracy. A.P.R Howatt (1984) says, "High priority is attached to meticulous standards of accuracy". Only few learners are given time to speak as the maximum amount of time is taken by the teacher in explaining the text. The students read the text one by one and ask doubts in their mother tongue as they are not comfortable with speaking in the target language that is English. Students in English class often experience high levels of anxiety. They feel hesitant to share their thoughts or ideas due to limited vocabulary and pronunciation issues, leading them to prefer staying silent in the class. The teacher does all the explanations in the mother tongue as well. The teacher gives practice in vocabulary by giving them a list of words in the target language and asking the learners to find equivalent terms in their mother tongue. The teacher then teaches them grammar deductively followed by exercise. There are no such listening activities or speaking activities done in the classroom. The teacher is totally dependent on the prescribed texts and lessons and has a very little scope to incorporate creative activities for the learners.

One major drawback of the Grammar Translation method is that it often prioritizes the memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary over practical language use. This can result in students struggling to communicate effectively in real-life situations where spontaneous language production is required. Furthermore, the method tends to focus heavily on written exercises, which may not adequately develop student's speaking and listening skills. Without sufficient practice in speaking and listening, learners find it challenging to engage in conversations and understand native speakers. Overall, while the Grammar Translation method can be beneficial for certain aspects of language learning, its limitations in promoting fluency and communication skills highlight the need for a more balanced approach to language education.

The researcher then suggests the teacher to allow her to engage the classroom using the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. The researcher prepares three listening activities and three speaking activities for the students. She also invites her supervisor to observe her teaching and give feedback through an observation sheet.

The chosen activities are as follows-

- Listening Activities
    1. Count it: In this activity the teacher plays a recording, reads a passage or a list of words and asks the students to count the number of times a sound occurs. This technique can be used to get learners to identify the number of times a specific sound/ word or a grammatical category occurs.
    The researcher reads aloud a word list. The word list consists of five words, four words with /z/ sound and one word with different sounds. The words were: zoo, zebra, sun, zero, zoom. Then the researcher asks the students to note how many times the /z/ sound has been pronounced. The students listen carefully and answer the question. The researcher then asks the learners to prepare a word list using different sounds for the same activity. Then the activity is repeated with different sets of words prepared by the learners.

    2. Flowcharts: For this activity the researcher first groups the students into 5 people in a group and then hands out a paper to each group. The paper consists of a flowchart with few blanks filled and rest empty for the students to fill them. The researcher tells the learners that she will be reading the text twice only so the learners will pay more attention to it. Then the researcher reads aloud the highlights of a story in a jumbled way. The learners have to arrange them accordingly and complete the story. The researcher then reads the highlights onces more so that the students who couldn't complete in the first go could complete the activity.
    The researcher hands out the flowchart to each group and then reads aloud the highlights of the story "The Monkey and the Crocodile" in a jumbled manner and asks the students to fill the flowcharts according to the chronology of the events. The following are the highlights from the story:

    1. Monkey and Crocodile were friends.

2. Crocodile's wife wanted to eat the monkey's heart.

3. Crocodile planned to trick the monkey.

4. Monkey rode on Crocodile's back.

5. Monkey knew the Crocodile's plan.

6. Monkey told Crocodile he left his heart on a tree.

7. Crocodile took Monkey back to get the heart.

8. Monkey escaped and saved himself.

9. Friendship ended due to deceit.

The students fill the following chart by listening carefully to the researcher. After all the groups have completed the activity the researcher exchanges the flowcharts between groups for peer correction.
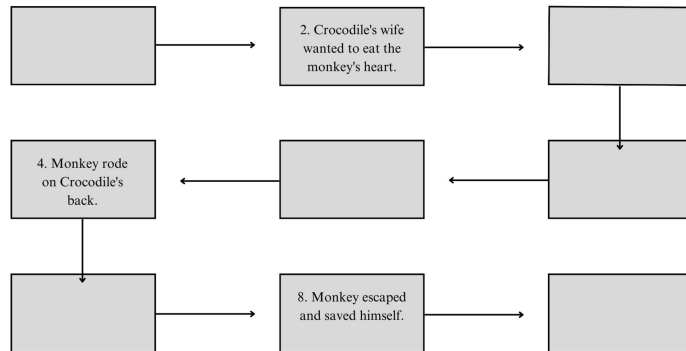

Fig. Flowchart

3. For the third activity the researcher goes to a little advanced level. For this activity the researcher plays an audio recording of two native speaker's conversation. The transcript of audio is as follows:

A: I'm sorry about this sir, but…

B: Oh! But I sent an email earlier.

A: We haven't received it sir. And I'm so sorry but there is no available room.

B: This is intolerable. You expect me to go and look for a room right now?

A: Well, I did tell you, sir, there's a marriage party and…

B: I'll report to the Manager. Where is he?

Then the researcher asks the learners about the mood, attitude, social status etc of   the concern rather than the context.

Questions could be like- Who are the speakers? Where is the conversation taking place? How would you describe the mood of Speaker A and Speaker B?

- Speaking Activities
    1. Tongue twisters: The researcher gives a tongue twister to the learners. The tongue twister used here is: The sixth, sick Sheik's sixth sheep is sick.
    Each student tries to speak the tongue twister with proper pronunciation. The researcher motivates the students to use only the target language to communicate during and after the class as well. These tongue twisters can be used to practice difficult English sounds, or sounds which learners cannot easily articulate.

    2. Dialogues and Role play: This technique deals with the interactional aspect of speaking. The researcher had beforehand prepared some role play cards with the place and roles in it. Real and plausible situations are given so that the learners feel that they might be in such a situation. The researcher pairs the students and gives them a card. Then the researcher gives five minutes for the students to prepare their dialogues. Then each pair comes to the front and presents their dialogues. In this manner each student gets two-five minutes to speak in this activity.
    The students use the role play cards and enact the roles. The following is an example of the role play:

    Customer: "Hello, how much are these tomatoes?"

    Vendor: "Hello! These tomatoes are 20 rupees per kilogram. Would you like to buy some?"

Customer: "Yes, I'll take half a kilogram, please."

Vendor: "Sure, here you go, half a kilogram of fresh tomatoes. That will be 10 rupees, please."

Customer: "Great, here's the money. Do you have any fresh cucumbers as well?"

Vendor: "Yes, we have some lovely cucumbers right here. They are 15 rupees each. How many would you like?"

Customer: "I'll take two cucumbers, please."

Vendor: "Here you go, two fresh cucumbers. That will be 30 rupees in total. Thank you for shopping with us!"

Customer: "Thank you so much. Your vegetables look great. I'll definitely come back for more."

3. For the final activity the researcher continues with the pairing and distributes different pictures to each pair. The researcher asks the students to prepare five questions based on the picture. Five minutes are given to the students to prepare the questions. After that each student of a pair asks their questions to each other and answers them.

Results

This section contains the supervisor's feedback through the observation sheet. There are five criteria set in the observation sheet through which the data was collected. The observation sheet is designed as below.

Observation Sheet

1. What kinds of interaction occur in the classroom?
2. What kind of grouping arrangements does the researcher use and how effective are they?
3. What kind of learning activities does the researcher employ?
4. What kind of on-the-spot decisions does the researcher make while teaching?
5. How effectively does the researcher utilize learning opportunities within a lesson?

It is noticed that when the researcher taught in the Communicative Language Teaching Approach then most students took part in the activities. The class is more learner centric rather than being teacher centric as done by the previous teacher. As the class is more learner centric, the students are more active than before. Each student get time to speak and work on his/her communicative skills.

The researcher asks the learners about their experiences and the students respond that they are now thrilled to learn in the classroom. One student responds, " It was much more interesting than the previous methods used to teach English." Another says, " I would love it if all the teachers engage the classes in the CLT approach".

The researcher groups the students so that the learner can learn from their peers as many students get nervous when the teacher corrects them or gives them feedback. The researcher divides the learners into pairs as well as groups of five so that learners know how to work in a group. The grouping is done with one bright student, two average students and two slow learners to keep the balance in learning.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emphasizes practical communication skills and real-life language use. CLT focuses on developing student's ability to communicate effectively in English by engaging them in interactive activities, discussions, and tasks that simulate authentic language use situations. The researcher uses activities such as role play, question and answers based on pictures and audios. The researcher also uses flowcharts and word list to create interesting activities for the learners.

One key aspect of CLT is the emphasis on meaningful communication over rote memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary. Students are encouraged to use the language in context, promoting fluency and natural language production. By engaging in activities such as role-plays, debates, and collaborative projects, students are provided with opportunities to practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English.

Furthermore, CLT values the importance of student-centered learning, where learners take an active role in their language acquisition process. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students through communicative tasks and providing feedback to enhance language development. This learner-centered approach encourages autonomy and motivation among students, leading to a more engaging and effective learning experience.

In summary, the CLT approach stands out for its focus on practical communication skills, interactive learning activities, and student-centered instruction, making it a more dynamic and effective method for teaching English compared to the traditional Grammar Translation approach.

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted, the findings indicate that the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has had a positive impact on language learning outcomes at CGU Polytechnic. Through the use of CLT principles, students have shown improvements in practical communication skills, engagement levels, and overall language proficiency. The interactive nature of CLT activities has promoted a more dynamic and engaging learning environment, leading to enhanced language acquisition and a better overall learning experience for the students. This research suggests that integrating CLT into language teaching practices at CGU Polytechnic has been beneficial in promoting effective language learning and student development.

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