

The Role of Instructors in Implementing Communicative Language Teaching Methodology

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of instructors in implementing communicative language teaching methodology in their classroom. In order to achieve this objective seventy second and third year students of English, Amharic and Afan Oromo departments of Madawalabu University were participated. Besides, sixteen instructors of the mentioned departments were also included in the study. Furthermore, the researchers used three instruments namely, questionnaire, interview and classroom observation to collect the required data from the participants. While both open and closed ended questionnaires used with instructors and students to gather the information from participants; whereas interview was done only with instructors. On the top of this, the researchers carried out classroom observation with the help of check list. The result of the study collected through the above three tools revealed that as there are shortage of up to date teaching materials, lack of experience on the part of instructors and problems of using different active learning methods in order to implement CLT methodology effectively and efficiently in their teaching-learning process. Hence, it was recommended that the instructors should use various active learning methods in order to address the learning styles of students. It was also forwarded that the university has to equip the departments with a lot of teaching materials facilities, experience sharing workshops and seminars to assist less experienced instructors to boost their commitment as to apply their maximum effort in the classroom.

Key words: communicative, methodology, active learning, student-centred

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, communicative language teaching methodology is one of the most important methods that language instructors use in their classroom (Little wood 1981) and Brown (1994). Proponent of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach argues that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students are in need of CLT methodology in order to gain facility and confidence in using the language. The CLT methodology discourages extensive teacher-controlled drills, quizzing of memorized material, and extended commentary on forms of English. The instructors who teach language have to develop interest towards using CLT methodology as well as various types of active learning methods that fit with the different learning style and strategies of the students. In spite of many challenges to implementing a communicative approach, there remains a strong rational for pursuing CLT methodology, especially when instruction envisions learners moving on to use the language for further education or career advancement. Ellis (1996), Brown (1994) and Larsen-Freeman (2000) identified that teachers revert to traditional teacher-centred routines, lack of students pre-requisites skills, continued use of traditional examinations, etc are the main problems to use CLT methodology. Thus, it appears that even instructors who are well versed in the theory and fundamentals of communicative language teaching face an uphill battle in English as a foreign language setting.

Today's language teachers mostly manipulate much more information in several different areas of knowledge. The problem lies not only in the amount of information to be mastered, but in the organization and application of that knowledge to a practical situation. In other words, how teachers can use the knowledge of linguistics, psychology, sociology and pedagogy to help the students learn the language is an important point to be considered. Therefore, the use of CLT methodology assists the students in order to develop confidence in using the language for effective interaction in social contexts. Examining the problem related to the methods they have been using currently and revising for their future use in line with the present technological development is the main responsibility of the language instructors, especially at higher institution. Different scholars like Richards and Rodgers (1986), Larsen-Free man (1986) and other discussed in detail about methods like grammar translation, direct method, audio-lingual, silent way, suggestopedia, community language learning, total physical

response and communicative language teaching. All these various methods have their own advantages and drawbacks. The scholars also analysed these methods in relation to goals, roles of teacher and students, the teaching-learning process, the nature of interaction, how language is viewed, what areas of language emphasised and how evaluation is accomplished. These give the language teachers which method to use in their language class in order to develop students' confidence to use the language in social interaction. At the present time language teachers shift the emphasis from traditional approach to modern methods of teaching language. In this approach, students' competence in using language for meaningful interaction in real life situation is given priority.

Teacher centred approach is dominated by continuous teacher lecture while the students are passively following him. The teachers also act as all knowing and want to pour knowledge to students considering them as empty vessels. It is the impact of the way the teachers themselves learnt that can be reflected in their teaching-learning process. The teacher himself/herself accomplishes the planning, design, adjusting and delivering the course for the students. The students do not have a say in the teaching-learning process. Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that teacher-centred approach focuses on extensive teacher-controlled drills, quizzing of memorized activities and extended commentary on the forms of the language. Whatever the case, students end up doing less communication activity. In other words, excessive teacher talk hampers the emergence of sustained purposeful student talk. Unquestionably, teacher talk is essential for initiating learning activities, setting standards, assessing performances, and providing some forms of feedback. However, he/she has to identify the extent to which this variable of his/her talk limits the realization of authentic communication among students in the classroom. On the other hand, student-centred approach is a paradigm shift from teacher-centred approach to student-centred approach where the students practice more, assess their own progress, develop confidence, etc in using the language for meaningful interaction. As it has been stated by different writers, student-centred approach assists the learners in developing independence, discovery approach and bearing responsibility for their own learning. In this approach the teacher also develops effective knowledge of designing tasks, organizing activities, selecting appropriate classroom setting and assessment criteria to see the behavioural change of students.

The current situation of the CLT is summarized by Brown as follows:

Today we are benefiting from the victories and defeats of our professional march through history. But today the methodological issues are quite different and quite complex. Beyond grammatical and discourse elements in communication, we are probing the nature of social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language. We are exploring pedagogical means for "real-life" communication in the classroom. We are trying to get our learners to develop linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy that has so consumed our historical journey. We are equipping our students with tools for generating unrehearsed language performance "out there" when they leave the womb of our classrooms. We are concerned with how to facilitate lifelong language learning among our students, not just with the immediate classroom task. We are looking at learners as partners in a cooperative venture. And our classroom practices seek to draw on whatever intrinsically sparks learners to reach their fullest potential. (1994:77).

Little wood (1981:1) states, "One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systemic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language." At the level of language theory, communicative language teaching has a rich, somewhat eclectic, theoretical base. Little wood (1981) and Johnson (1982) mentioned that learning activities are consequently selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use. Atkins et al (1995) also added communicative classroom learning contexts that involve learners whose goal is learning itself, but the teaching emphasises speaking and listening, reading and writing for communication and language use, rather than learning about the language. In recent years a lot of attention has been given to the varying roles that a language teacher has. According to Lopez (1984) and Nunan (1989), it is believed that as learners have varying needs, interests and cognitive styles, the teacher is expected to eclectically use as many methods and techniques as possible in contrast to the past situation in which a teacher was supposed to follow one best methodology and one best text book. Hence, the teachers' responsibilities are much more demanding than those of the former days. Teacher dominated activities have been replaced by learner-centred classes, where learners become active participants in the learning process. Therefore, teachers may adopt various roles like manager, facilitator, planner, motivator, group organizer, etc (Richards and Lockhart, 1994).

In communicative language teaching several roles are assumed for a teacher. According to Breen and Candlin (1980) cited in Richards and Rodgers (1986), a teacher is facilitator of the communication process, needs analyst, counsellor, and process manager. The CLT teacher assumes a responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs. The teacher has the responsibility to use text-based, task based and realia effectively in his/her classroom. The roles of teachers and learners are in many ways, complementary. Giving the learners a different role requires the teacher to adopt a different role. Language teacher plays active and effective role in need analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, using appropriate methodology and assessing students' progress.. According to Atkins et al (1996), research shows that teachers can positively influence students' understanding of lessons by asking questions, by giving students the chance to ask and answer questions, and more generally by promoting an atmosphere in which participation is encouraged. Learning is an active developmental process in which learners use their existing knowledge to make sense of the flow of new information.

Generally, the roles of the teacher and the learner can be seen in relation to their contributions to the learning process in terms of the activities they are required to carry out. Moreover, these role relationships between teachers and learners determine the type of interaction characteristics of the classroom. Therefore, the types of language classrooms in different methods are characterized by different patterns of interaction as a result of the variation in teacher and learner roles in line with the expectations in the teaching-learning process. Hence, this paper is concerned with assessing the role language instructors in using CLT methodology and the type of active learning method they apply in their classrooms with particular reference to English Amharic and Afan Ormo departments in Madawalabu University, Ethiopia.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to identify the role of language instructors in using communicative language teaching methodology in their classrooms in Madawalabu University. It assessed the extent English, Amharic and Afan Oromo instructors use various active learning methods by focusing on the following specific objectives.

- To examine the extent language instructors use CLT methodology in the course they offer.
- To assess the type of active learning methods they utilize effectively in their classroom.
- To see the impact of the methodology they use have on the students' performance.

Significance of the Study

It is believed that the results of the study are applicable to English, Amharic and Afan Oromo departments.

It would give the following invaluable insights to:

- Support English, Amharic and Afan Oromo instructors how to apply effective and efficient CLT methodology.
- Help language instructors how to develop and use various tasks and activities through CLT methodology.
- Assist course writers in order to include appropriate classroom setting which suit to CLT methodology.
- Motivate and use as stepping stone for other researchers in order to conduct research in depth and wide coverage that helps instructors to utilize CLT methodology in their teaching-learning process.

METHODOLOGY

This study was mainly designed to investigate the role of language instructors in using CLT methodology, and the kinds of active learning methods they apply in their teaching-learning process. So, to achieve this goal, the following methods were applied.

Research Subjects and Sampling

1. Students

Student participants were selected from second and third year students of the three departments. Since first year students did not arrive at the beginning of the research, they were not included. The total numbers of 2nd and 3rd year students of these departments were 280. In English department, there were 92 (52 2nd year and 40 3rd year) students. 23 students were selected from this department. The total number of students in Amharic department was 76 (36 2nd year and 40 3rd year students). From this 19 students were selected for the study. Besides, 28 students were taken out of 112 (52 2nd year and 60 3rd year) students in Afan Oromo department. In sum, 70 students out of the total (280) were selected through simple random sampling technique from the departments mentioned above.

2. Instructors

The total number of language instructors was 16 (i.e 8 English, 5 Afan Oromo, and 3 Amharic). All of the instructors were included in the study. Thus, eight English, five Afan Oromo and three Amharic instructors were taken through comprehensive sampling technique because of their limited number. All the sixteen instructors filled the questionnaire, eight of them were interviewed, and six of them were observed while the actual teaching-learning process was going on.

Instruments

Research data was collected from the sample subjects through questionnaire, interview, and classroom observation. These instruments would help the researchers to triangulate the results obtained and to arrive at reliable and valid conclusion.

1. Questionnaires

Two sets of questionnaires, one for language instructors and the other for selected students, were administered. They were produced in line with the objective and the review of related literature. Moreover, the questionnaires (i.e both students' and instructors' questions) were of two types: closed – ended and open ended questions. The questions deals with the use of CLT methodology, various active learning methods, the impact the methodology has on students' performance, and related issues.

2. Interview

Further qualitative data has been collected via interview. This interview has been used to consolidate the data gathered through other techniques. It was carried out with eight instructors. It was believed that the semi-structured interview would enable the researchers to get in depth information by clarifying the questions they were asked systematically to the interviewees.

3. Classroom Observation

As to many scholars such as Koul (1996), Nunan (1992), and Wallace (1988), gathering information through observation gives direct experience. Thus, it provides a clear picture of what the actual teaching–learning process looks like. In light of this, direct observation was made using structured observation check list during the actual delivery of lessons in language classrooms at the departments under consideration.

Data Collection Procedure

The students' questionnaire was piloted in the three departments to assess the clarity of items. The pilot study helped the researchers to get a solution for technical problems related to the way of administering and the style of questionnaires. Finally, after necessary amendments made on them all the administered questionnaires for both teachers and students were duly filled and returned. Next to questionnaire, the researchers interviewed eight volunteer instructors. Lastly, classroom observation was made while the instructors in the three departments were delivering their lessons.

Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data from close-ended items in both teachers' and students' questionnaires were analysed quantitatively by tallying the responses given for each item. In addition to this, to analyse the data the researchers would categorize and analyse responses using tables, and percentage followed by interpretation and brief discussion. The open-ended questions of the questionnaires, interview items, and observations' comments or notes were discussed in qualitative method of data analysis. In other words, these items and comments have been analysed very closely line –by- line or even word-by-word. From this intense scrutiny of the data, for each word and phrase or sentence many possible meanings that have relation with the intention of the study are recorded and analysed. Finally, conclusion and recommendation were given based on the findings obtained from the research work.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of the Responses of Instructors to the Questionnaires

Some of the major questionnaires of both instructors and students were discussed below.

Table 1 Instructors' responses to 'teacher-centred' and 'students-centred' methods

No	Items	Teacher-centred	Student-centred	Both
		No.R	No.R	No.R
1	Which of the following methods motivates you to apply in the teaching-learning process?	-	10	6
2	Which of the following methods do you think is difficult for you to implement in your language classroom?	4	9	3

Those (4 instructors) who thought that teacher-centred as difficult method to implement stated the following reasons:

- It does not assist the instructors to identify learners and problem areas of teaching-learning process.
- Students are not actively involved in the learning process so that instructors cannot see the actual performance of the learners. Also, they do not know whether students understand or not.
- Learners cannot develop their communicative skills.

Majority (9) of the respondents said 'student-centred' and pointed out the following problems:

- Large class size
- Classroom situation (sitting arrangement –seats/chairs)
- Shortage of materials
- Limited time available to involve all students-time consuming
- It needs more preparation than teacher-centred.

When we see the results of the two items from Table 1 there are instructors who have interest to use learner-centred method of teaching whatever difficult the situation it may be. On the other hand, there are teachers who are less interested to implement learner-centred (which is central to CLT) method thinking that it is a difficult method to employ due to some reasons. Generally, from this the researchers deduced that CLT or student –centred method is challenging for most language instructors though they are interested to use it. This is because of the reasons stated above and other related problems. In spite of this fact, all instructors (respondents) thought that the method is important to develop their students' communicative competence.

Table 2 Instructors' responses to frequency of using learner-centred approach and getting stationery material

No.	Items	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
		F	F	F	F	F
3.	How often do you use learner-centred (CLT) approach?		5	11	-	-
5.	How often do you get satisfactory stationery materials that assist you to apply CLT methodology?	-	-	-	6	10
6.	How often do you provide the students with course module?		2	3	-	11

The above table implies that most of language instructors employ lecture method /teacher-centred approach in their classroom teaching, they did not get enough teaching materials and rarely support the students' with module.

Table 3 Instructors' responses to some practical characteristics of CLT methodology in relation to students.

No.	Items	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
		F	F	F	F	F
4.	To what extent do you think your students are encouraged and motivated to use the language with confidence and for meaningful communication?	1	4	11	-	-
7.	To what extent the activities in your teaching material are motivating the students so that they are actively involved in the learning process?	2	4	10	-	-
8.	In your way of teaching, students are given the chance of contributing their experiences to classroom learning.	-	7	9	-	-

9.	How often do you attempt to link classroom language teaching with language activation outside the classroom?	1	5	10	-	-
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As the data indicates, most of the instructors responded ‘sometimes’ to those items indicated in the table. Therefore, it is possible to say that some of the features of CLT are reflected to some extent in the teaching-learning process, as far as most instructors are concerned. The result sounds to the researchers because instructors’ responses to interview and the reasons given by them show that there are factors affecting the extent of utilization of CLT methodology.

2. Analysis of Students’ Responses to Questionnaires

Table 4 Students responses’ concerning the extent their instructors motivate, help, encourage and give them feedback.

No.	Items	Always		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	To what extent does your instructor motivate you to learn the language effectively?	15	21.43	18	25.71	26	37.14	11	15.71		
2.	How often does your instructor help you when you work on certain activities/ exercises given in the classroom	13	18.57	11	15.71	38	54.29	8	11.43		
3.	To what extent does your instructor encourage you to use the language for effective and meaningful communication purposes?	10	14.29	16	22.86	36	51.43	8	11.43		
4.	How often does your instructor give feedback to your work?	8	11.43	6	8.57	40	57.14	16	22.86		

It should be noted, however, that there were certain variations among teachers, as shown in the table, in motivating, helping, and encouraging the students as well as giving feedback to their work. It can tentatively be said that there are instructors who could do these to some extent, and instructors who could do all these to a great extent. It is also, possible to say that there are different students in the classroom who have different views, perceptions, attitudes, etc about language learning, instructors and

their methods of teaching. This notion helps us to understand as to why most students reported that their instructors did motivate, help, encouraged, and give feedback to some extent, whereas, some of them said to a great extent.

Table 5 Students' responses to whether the activities are motivating, related with real world, sufficient and varied.

No	Item	Yes		No		Not sure		Sometimes	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
6	Are the activities provided by your instructors motivating and preventing you from becoming bored or passive?	36	51.43	9	12.85	7	10	18	25.71
7	Are the activities related with real world situations?	35	50	10	14.29	6	8.57	19	27.14
8	Are the activities sufficient and varied to enhance effective language learning?	30	42.85	14	20	5	7.14	21	30

Regarding the three items in the above table the students pointed out about the activities power of motivation, whether they related to real life situation and sufficient to enhance effective learning atmosphere.

3. Analysis of Interview Questions

The researchers randomly interviewed eight instructors: four from English language, two from Afan Oromo and two from Amharic departments. The first item of the interview dealt with what kinds of techniques they have been using to teach their subject area and the reasons for using the techniques. Although there are slight differences the majority of them stated that they have been using lecture, gaped lecture, pair and group work activities. Regarding the second item in the interview whether CLT methodology assists the students to develop confidence in using language for meaningful communication, all of them mentioned that as CLT methodology gives the way for their students to express their ideas, views, feelings, etc freely. They also supplemented as the students develop their macro and micro-skills of language through participating in pair work, group work, role plays and other communicative activities. Six of the instructors believed that the techniques they have been using currently in classroom like lecture method, gapped lecture, pair and group work benefited the students in the courses they have been offering. The remaining two instructors even if they share the above ideas, they are in need of using other various active learning methods except their fear of large class size and shortage of resources. Concerning the extent instructors supplement the teaching of their course with up-to-date materials in the fourth item all of them mentioned that as they use rarely few up to date materials in the classroom. They have indicated their reasons as there is problem to get internet access in the university, lack of recently published books, journals and no strong relationship with experienced Universities in order to get reference materials and face-to face exposure to enhance the teaching- learning process.

Item five dealt with the interest of the students towards following the courses. All of the respondents mentioned that as the majority of the students are interested to learn the courses offered by their instructors. But the problem is that as the instructors indicated since some of the students joined the departments with out their choice and the language is foreign language to them they face difficulties. Lack of good background knowledge, shortage of up-to-date reference materials and awareness problem to cope-up-with the new environment are the main hindrances in their motivation. On the other hand, item six was raised to get whether all the students properly carry out the activities

and exercises given in the classroom. Almost all of the respondents agreed as there are individual differences to carry out the activities properly in the classroom. They have raised as a reason students background knowledge, motivation towards the course, the level in class (high, medium and slow learners), the extent they bear responsibility for their own learning, etc. Regarding item seven the instructors reflected on the difficulties the students face in using the language for effective communication purpose and the way they handle the difficulties. The respondents indicate problems like lack of self-confidence, interference of mother tongue during interaction, fear of making mistake, lack of motivation, etc. The final item designed to know what instructors recommend in order to improve the teaching-learning process in their departments. The interviewed instructors stated the following key points in order to improve the teaching-learning process.

- Identifying learners according to their level in order to give them proper support.
- Preparing and using different modules
- Using various CLT methodologies that address students learning styles.
- Giving proper guidance before and after they join the department.
- Assisting the students to bear responsibility for their own learning.
- Convincing the University to equip the library with up-to-date materials and internet access.
- Creating conducive atmosphere and friendly relationship with students.
- Using continuous assessment effectively, etc.

Thus, from the above interview responses we can understand that as the use of CLT methodology assists the students to develop self-confidence and use the language effectively in real life situation.

4. Analysis of Classroom Observation

Six instructors, three from English, two from Afan Oromo and one from Amharic departments were observed while they were delivering their courses. The researchers used checklist that assists them to get the required information from the classroom. When we start with the first round observations from six-instructors three of them were seen while they were using lecture, question-answer and group work frequently in the classroom. During lecture time some of the students sat without taking notes. Few of them tried to copy what the instructors wrote on the board. In question and answer activities comparatively there were good participation especially in Afan Oromo classrooms. In English and Amharic classroom only a few of them hardly communicated effectively to respond to instructors questions. It seems the instructors have to give appropriate support and motivation in order to make the students confident enough in expressing their views and opinions. Apart from what has been stated above, the remaining two instructors were observed while continuously using lecture methods. This shows us the instructors took much of the time instead of making the students participate through the use of various active teaching methods. In teaching different language skills and sub-skills the instructors have to utilize various active learning methods in order to address the learning strategies of students in a class. Regarding the second round observation in addition to what they used in the first round observation out of the three English language instructors two of them frequently used individual, pair and question-answer techniques in order to help their students get concrete information about the subject under discussion. One of the English language instructors and the Amharic instructor used lecture and group discussion where the students reflect their final work through their representative. Besides, what the researchers collected through interview from the respondents are the same. The instructors indicated that as they have been using individual, pair, group work and lecture methods more frequently.

In general from the overall results obtained with the help of the three tools, it appears that the majority of the respondents mentioned as various active learning met their learning styles or assisted them to develop confidence in using the language for meaningful interaction. Yet, the instructors restricted themselves in using only a few common types of active learning methods.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of language instructors in using communicative language teaching methodology in the courses they offer. Three instruments, namely questionnaires, observation and interview were used to collect the data from the respondents. The information collected through the above tools, revealed that language instructors were rarely applied active learning methods like role play, language games, drama, project work, cross group, etc in the classroom. The open-ended questionnaires of both instructors and students also clearly indicated as the students have the interest of improving their language skills through different techniques used to deliver the language skills and sub-skills. Moreover, motivation of the instructors in order to make the students risk-taker for their learning, assessing the students and giving constructive feedback were underlined by the majority of the respondents. The instructors have to get support according to the finding through short training in order to give different activities for their students to make them competent in expressing themselves as well as their environment using appropriate vocabulary, intelligible grammar, good pronunciation, reasonable organization of ideas, and understanding their partner both in oral and written communication.

To put into a nut shell, both instructors and students stated that the use of communicative language teaching methodology prepared ground for the students to interaction with one another in confidence. Nevertheless, instructors tend to use only a few common types of active learning methods because of the different reasons that they briefly explained through the three tools that the researchers used in collecting the pertinent information from them.

Recommendation

On the basis of the findings obtained in the study, the following recommendations are forwarded in order to assist the students to develop confidence in using the language for meaningful interaction.

- Although the instructors understand that the application of CLT methodology enhances students' confidence in using the language, they use only the common types of active learning methods, in their classroom. Thus, it is recommended that instructors should use methods like language game, role play, drama, etc for the benefits of their students.
- The results of the study also proved that as there is scarcity of up-to-date reference materials, lack of internet access and language laboratory from where the students and instructors utilize a lot of knowledge and skills. Hence, it is recommended that the faculty and the University's higher management body should find the means to overcome these problems.
- It is obvious that there are experienced and newly graduated instructors in three of the language departments. This may have its own impact in using CLT methodology effectively. So it is unquestionable to prepare experience sharing workshops, short training, involving new instructors in higher diploma programme (HDP), etc as much as possible. These boost instructors' knowledge, skill and abilities of using CLT methodology in their classroom.

Finally, if the above recommendations are acted upon, the students will get the opportunity to develop confidence in using the language effectively and efficiently in various contexts. The instructors also improve themselves in applying CLT methodology to satisfy the dynamic needs of growing student population.

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