

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE USE OF COMMUNICATIVE
LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ENHANCING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS'
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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ABSTRACT: *English language which is the second and unifying language in Nigeria is taught at all educational levels in the country mainly to ensure that students have a grasp of it and should be able to communicate effectively in it in various contexts. This study investigated the perception of English language teachers towards the use of Communicative Language Teaching in enhancing secondary school students' communicative competence in English language. This study is a descriptive research of the survey type which focuses on how secondary school students in Ibadan South –West Local Government Area of Oyo State can use English Language in real life situations. Fifty English Language teachers randomly selected from some secondary schools constituted the sample for the study. A self- constructed questionnaire consisting of fifteen items was used to collect the data for the study. Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and a reliability coefficient of 0.74 was obtained. The study found out that schools lack the material that can promote communicative language teaching in schools and that most teachers considered classroom interaction a time consuming activity. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the government should provide gadgets and necessary materials needed for effective utilization of communicative language teaching so that students' confidence in speaking and communicative competence can be improved. Teachers should endeavor to make their classes interactive and employ activities that can facilitate English Language usage in real life situation.*

KEYWORDS: *Communicative Language, Pedagogy, Communicative Competence, Classroom Interaction, Methodologies*

INTRODUCTION

The aims of language teaching are commonly defined in relation to the four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). Listening and reading are regarded as receptive skills while speaking and writing are classified as productive skills. Speaking has been seen as the most important of the four language skills. English Language is Nigeria's second language and due to the multilingual situation of the country, it has assumed prominent roles. It is the unifying language that allows for easy communication among Nigerians. English Language is regarded as language of the educated as its effective use is prominent among those who are

educated. The ability to communicate effectively in English Language automatically qualifies one as being educated. Speaking is the most commonly used aspect of language. Lai and Amadi (2016) believe that speaking is the most important of the four skills. According to them, “people who know a language are referred to as speakers of that language”.

English Language teaching requires the use of different methods as the method used by teachers will determine how actively the learners will be involved in the class. Personal observation shows that many language teachers do not vary their teaching methods. English Language is a second language in Nigeria and communicating effectively in it can only be achieved if learners are made to communicate in it. Language teachers are meant to be facilitators and the method employed by the teacher will have effects on the attitude and performance of students in the subject.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking is one of the most important skills to be developed and enhanced as a means of effective communication. Language learners sometimes evaluate their success in language learning based on how well they have improved in their speaking ability. In our society today, people form judgement about our language competence only by our speaking skill rather than any other language skills. That is why those who cannot express themselves fluently in English are regarded as illiterates. Babalola (2016) opines that any literate Nigerian must of necessity not only be able to read and write English language, but also communicate effectively in it. The main aim of English language teaching is to give learners the ability to use English Language effectively and correctly in communication (Davies and Pearse, 2000). However, it seems that many students are still struggling when it comes to communicating effectively in English Language. This can be attributed to various reasons ranging from teachers’ methods of teaching to the kind of materials used in the teaching process. The reality of the scenario is captured in the view of Akinwamide (2013) that states that , Nigeria language teachers have their own deficiencies as Second language teachers, hence, there are bound to be some gaps in Nigeria Language classrooms.

The teaching of English Language in Nigeria centres on reading, grammar, mechanics, writing and oral English. In the oral English class, sounds that make up English words are pronounced in isolation. In some schools, English language teachers leave out the teaching of the supra-segmental aspect of oral English. The oral English class is the only time speaking is taught. It is a general practice that oral English which is supposed to be more of practical is taught theoretically in the normal conventional way of teaching. This can be attributed to the non-availability of language laboratories in most of Nigerian secondary schools.

English speaking goes beyond the ability to produce sound. Its aim centres on effective communication. Observation revealed that many secondary school students cannot express themselves correctly in English language. The reason behind this is that they lack the required linguistic competence needed for speaking. This can be the reason why some of them are unnecessarily quiet in class. The students’ inability to express themselves fluently in English language can have an impact on their academic performance. Research over the years revealed that students who have the necessary linguistic competence to express themselves correctly in

English tend to perform better in their academics than those who lack the linguistic competence needed to express themselves in English.

However, all these impediments can be overcome if learners are presented with the right environment to practise English speaking. If learners are allowed to use English the way they will use it outside the classroom, in the real life setting, then their performance in speaking can improve. To be able to speak a language fluently, one must know how the language is used in a social context. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a new approach in language teaching which lays more emphasis on fluency rather than grammatical competence. Based on its tenets, it is believed that Communicative Language Teaching if properly employed by English Language teachers can improve communicative competence among students. Sana (2013) says Communicative Language Teaching is an effective method to develop students' speaking skills.

Interaction is considered a central part of Communicative Language Teaching. It gets students involved in communication using the target language. Richards (2006) emphasises that people learn one language when they use it to do things rather than by studying its function. The goal of CLT is "Communicative competence". In the traditional classroom setting, emphasis is placed on the attainment of grammatical competence where students are expected to have a mastery of the grammatical rules governing the use of English language. This is done mainly through drilling and memorisation. Being grammatically competent in the use of a language is not enough as most students still struggle to use the language effectively when they get to the real world. Rodriguez (2010) says being competent implies more than knowing the linguistic code; it also necessitates being able to negotiate meaning and to interact socially in the target language. He further highlights the principles of CLT to include:

- Learners develop their ability to communicate in genuine context since contextualization is a basic need.
- The contents of a language course are based on social communication functions and not merely on linguistic structures.
- Students work in groups to establish meaningful negotiation when they are involved in role-playing activities, problem-solving tasks, dramatization, and simulations of situations in real life.
- Classroom materials and activities are authentic as they reflect typical real-life situations.

Though they are well groomed on how sentences are formed, they are still at loss when placed in an environment which is different from their normal classroom setting. Nunan (1991) cited in Clement and Murugavel (2015) highlights five features of Communicative Language Teaching to include:

1. Learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. Authentic text into the learning situation.
3. Opportunities for learners to focus on the learning process.
4. Learner's own personal experience as vital contributing essential to classroom learning.
5. Linking classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

The main goal of CLT is attaining communicative competence. Nordquist (2018) says communicative competence refers to both the tacit knowledge of a language and the ability to use it effectively. The learning of a language should not only be limited to linguistic knowledge. Hymes cited in Seyedhamed and Sarimah (2017) proposes that social knowledge and social aspect

of language should be added besides linguistic knowledge. He believed that teaching and learning language is supposed to enable learners to use the language in communicative situations. Communicative competence will enhance fluency in a language.

Richards (2006) identifies aspects of language knowledge which communicative competence covers:

- Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions.
- Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and participants (e.g. knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication).
- Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g narratives, reports, interviews and conversations).
- Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g through using different kinds of communication strategies).

Different linguistic environment requires different language use. The way English is used in religious houses is different from the way it is used at sport centres. The way news is cast is different from how ordinary reading is done. Communicative competence of learners can be improved if they are exposed to different linguistic environment. Fluency which is the major aim of CLT can only be achieved when learners communicate using the target language.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that despite the fact that secondary school students have been exposed to the rules governing the use of English language, many of them still find it difficult to express themselves fluently in English language. Their inability to attain communicative competence in English can be linked to the methods employed by teachers in school and the type of linguistic environment the students are exposed to.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to find out if Communicative Language Teaching can enhance secondary school students' communicative competence in English language. This study also aimed at determining whether the methods of teaching and other activities employed by English language teachers facilitate the use of English as it is used in real life situation.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. Are the schools equipped with materials that can facilitate the use of English language in real life situation?
2. Does classroom interaction enhance students' communicative competence?
3. Do English language teachers employ teaching methods that can enhance students' communicative competence?
4. Are the students exposed to various linguistic environment that can improve their speaking skills?

METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive research of the survey type.

Population

The population of the study comprised of all the English language teachers in Ibadan South-West Local government area of Oyo state.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consists of fifty teachers who were selected through simple random sampling technique from some secondary schools in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Research Instrument

A self-constructed questionnaire designed for the English language teachers was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A contained personal information about respondents while section B contain 15 items. The respondents were asked to tick one out of the four options provided based on their acceptance or rejection of the statement. Fifty copies of the questionnaire were distributed and retrieved from the respondents.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The face and content validities were ensured by experts in language and specialists in Test and Measurement in the Faculty of education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. Unsuitable and wrongly constructed items were removed by these experts and unanimously agreed that it was suitable for its intended purpose. A test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument within an interval of two weeks and a reliability coefficient of 0.74 was obtained which was considered satisfactory enough.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis of data obtained from the administration of the questionnaire are presented below.

Research Question 1: Are the schools equipped with materials that can facilitate the use of English language in real life situation?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the availability of materials necessary for the usage of English Language in real life situation.

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		FREQ.	%	FREQ.	%
1.	Teachers were consulted during the process of textbook recommendation	15	30	35	70
2.	The recommended textbooks are enriched with activities that can facilitate the use of English language in real life situation	18	36	32	64
3	The school library is stocked with materials that can facilitate the use of English language in real life situation	16	32	34	68
4.	Schools have language laboratories and resource centres equipped with gadgets and other materials that can promote CLT	5	10	45	90

From the table above, 15(30%) of the respondents agreed that the teachers were consulted during the process of textbook recommendation while 35 (70%) disagreed. 18(36%) agreed that the recommended textbooks are enriched with activities that can facilitate the use of English language in real life situation while 32 (64%) indicated the recommended textbooks lack activities that can facilitate the use of English language in real life setting.

On the state of the school library in regards to whether it is stocked with materials that can promote the use of English in real life situation, 16(32%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 34(68%) of the respondents disagreed. 5(10%) agreed that secondary schools have language laboratories and resource centres equipped with gadgets and other materials that can promote CLT while 45(90%) totally disagreed with the assertion. Research Question 2: Does classroom interaction enhances students' communicative competence?

Table 2: Descriptive analysis showing whether classroom interaction on students' communicative competence.

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		FREQ.	%	FREQ.	%
1.	Making the class interactive improves students' speaking skill	46	92	4	8
2.	Allowing students to contribute to the teaching/learning activities is time consuming	42	84	8	16
3.	An interactive class boosts students' competence in speaking	48	96	2	4
4.	Classroom interaction helps students attain fluency and allows them communicate effectively in English language	33	66	17	34

Table 2 revealed that 46(92%) of the respondents opined that making the class interactive improves students' speaking skill while 4(8%) countered it. 42(84%) asserted that allowing the students to contribute to the teaching/learning activity is time consuming while 8 (16%) disagreed. 48(96%) believed that an interactive class boosts students' competence in speaking while only 2(4%) did not share the same belief. 33(66%) indicated that classroom interaction helps students attain fluency and allows them to communicate effectively in English language while 17(34%) rebutted it.

Research Question: Do English Language teachers employ teaching methods that can enhance students' communicative competence?

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of how teaching methods enhance communicative competence.

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		FREQ.	%	FREQ.	%
1.	Varying methods of teaching makes English class interesting	47	94	3	6
2.	Using different methods teaching can improve students, speaking skill	45	90	5	10
3.	Using different methods of teaching can be time consuming	28	56	22	44
4.	Teachers employ activities that allows students to communicate in English class	24	48	26	52

Table 3 indicated that 47(94%) of the respondents asserted that varying methods of teaching makes English language class interesting while just 3(6%) countered it. Also, 45(90%) were of the opinion that using different methods of teaching can improve students' speaking skill while 5(10%) disagreed with the opinion. 28(56%) of the respondents pointed out that using different teaching methods is time consuming while 22(48%) were of different opinion. 24(48%) believed that teachers employ activities that facilitate effective communication in English language class while 26(52%) did not share the same belief.

Research Question 4: Are the students exposed to various linguistic environments that can help improve their speaking skill?

Table 4: Descriptive analysis students' exposure to various linguistic environment and speaking skill.

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		FREQ.	%	FREQ.	%
1.	Students frequently go on excursion	6	12	44	88
2.	Taking the students on excursion to media houses helps improve their speaking skill	38	76	12	24
3	Exposing students to other linguistic environments like airport, sport centres can improve their communicative competence	35	70	15	30

DISCUSSION

The analysis suggested that teachers agree that Communicative Language Teaching is an effective tool that can be used to improve communicative competence of students in English language. The findings of the study revealed that teachers who are the major implementers of curriculum were not consulted before textbooks were recommended. This had invariably led to their inability to engage in activities which can improve the communicative competence of students since the recommended textbooks are not enriched with activities that can facilitate the use of English Language in real life situations.

The findings also revealed the state of school libraries that they lack necessary materials that can promote CLT. Even resource centres and language laboratories where the use of English language can be done without interference are not available in schools and in schools where they are available, they are not equipped with the necessary gadgets that they need to function effectively. This corresponds with the submission of Olagundoye and Akinwumi (2016) that language laboratories are not available in Nigerian secondary schools and that schools are not equipped with materials that can facilitate effective teaching of English Language.

The teachers are aware of the numerous benefits of classroom interaction and that it can be used as a major tool to boost students' confidence in speaking, it helps them attain fluency and allows them to communicate effectively in English Language which will in turn improve their overall performance in English Language. This corroborates with the findings of Kouicem (2010) that classroom interaction helps students reduce their speaking mistakes, produce new grammatical forms and words, thus strengthening their language ability. However, the teachers also perceived that classroom interaction can be time consuming since the time allocated for English Language is not enough to cover the teaching of the different aspects of the subject.

The findings of the study also revealed that teachers are familiar with various methods of teaching and concurred that varying methods of teaching can improve students' communicative competence. Despite their awareness of the importance of using different teaching methods, most of them still fail to vary their teaching methods to and employ activities that can facilitate communication in class.

Lastly, the role of various linguistic environments in improving the communicative competence of students in English Language cannot be over emphasized. The teachers are aware that taking the students on excursion to different environment where English Language is used in real life situations can improve their communicative competence in English but it is saddening that students are not exposed to these linguistic environments.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study clearly revealed that Communicative Language Teaching can be used to improve the speaking proficiency and the communicative competence of students in English Language. This can be achieved if necessary measures are put in place. If the various stakeholders in education work together; one does perform the responsibility of the other, then the goal of CLT which is attaining communicative competence can be achieved.

Also, the main aim of learning English Language is to be able to communicate effectively in its various contexts at any given time. This has become a bit difficult to achieve since the students' learning of English is restricted to the four walls of the classroom. They are not exposed to the various environments where English is used in the real life situation so that they can learn how to communicate effectively in the language when they eventually find themselves in such environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1 Teachers should be consulted before the recommendation of English Language textbooks to students so that they can select the ones that have enough activities that can facilitate the use of Communicative Language Teaching in class.
- 2 Teachers should allow students to participate actively in class by engaging them in activities that can boost their confidence in speaking and also improve their communicative competence.
- 3 Government should make available well equipped language laboratories and resource centres where students can practice the use of English Language in various contexts.
- 4 The school library should be stocked with relevant materials that can facilitate effective usage of English language.
- 5 Students should be made to frequently visit different linguistic environments where English is used in real life situations so that they can learn how to effectively use the language in real life situations.
- 6 Teachers should not limit their teaching to the use of a single method of teaching. They should endeavor to vary their teaching methods from time to time.

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