Factors Hindering the Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching Method in English Language Classroom in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the factors hindering the implementation of communicative language teaching method in English language classroom in Nigeria. Descriptive research method was adopted for the study. An online questionnaire was used to elicit responses form 480 Nigerian English Language teachers. Purposive random sampling was used to choose all the English Language teachers in secondary schools Nigeria. The questionnaire consisted of three sections in line with research questions raised. The results were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that the prominent factors hindering the implementation of communicative language teaching method in English language classroom in Nigeria are student-related, teacherrelated and institutional-related. The paper concludes that there is a great need for intensive effort from all stakeholders for effective implementation of communicative language teaching method which ranges from developing the learner's motivation, giving more attention to communicative skills to prioritizing teacher's proficiency, reducing their workloads, developing effective assessment instrument to evaluate the learners to developing policy on class size and time for teaching, providing adequate materials for communicative activities, organizing effective training on CLT teaching methods, among other things since the goal teaching is communicative competence.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), CLT implementation, student-related factors, teacher-related factors, institutional-related factors, CLT in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Language teaching has experienced the growth of diverse approaches over the course of its historical progression. Several approaches and methods have been developed in the English Language Teaching especially as a second or foreign language. These approaches or methods have undergone thorough examination and study by researchers and scholars with each demonstrating specific areas of emphasis, weaknesses, and strengths, till Communicative language teaching (CLT) came to existence courtesy of Dell Hymes 1979 all in a bid to meet the rising learners' needs to communicate effectively in English Language.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) has become a new alternative responding to the traditional approach which is well known as grammar translation based. CLT is an infusion of various language theories and concepts. Through the CLT approach, learners are groomed to develop their communicative competence by using the language in a social contexts (meaningful and real-life situations). Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that the CLT approach has prioritized real-life communication as a means of developing language competencies in authentic contexts. Since CLT gives much value to meaning since communication is the ultimate goal of second language acquisition (Qasserras 2023). CLT is burdened with how the learner uses the target language for expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning effectively in a social context. CLT broadened the concept of language learning from just acquiring linguistic competence to incorporate other competences so that learners can use the target language that is not only grammatically correct but also appropriate for the given context. That is, rather than giving a primary attention to grammar, CLT seriously concerns 'what to say', 'how to say it', and 'in what situations' can be said (Nam 2023). This approach

emphasizes the importance of fluency over accuracy, making it a popular choice for language instruction in many contexts (Qasserras 2023).

Since the communicative competence was pioneered by Hymes (1972) and shaped by Canale and Swain (1980) elaborated by Celce-Murcia, Dornyel and Thurrell (1995) and Bachman and Palmer (1996), there has been new perspective of language learning emerged in language teaching due to the significant advantages of CLT.

However, CLT implementation has never been easy. Both teachers and students mostly find challenges in regards to the teaching model, teaching material, students' participation and many others. For instance, English teachers in Indonesia have encountered many problems that hinder them from implanting CLT in their teaching context. Also English teachers in Australia are faced with the practicality of CLT (Chang and Suparmi 2020, Sato and Kleinsasser 1999). In Korea, English learners' communicative competence was included in the National Education Curricula, 7th Revision (NEC) and intensified through pedagogic reforms promoting CLT yet there are still gap between CLT and English teaching in the Korean educational context as well as doubts of its feasibility to warrant change in the current educational climate in Korea. Worse still, CLT seems to be applied only in 'demonstration classes' for school inspectors or parents (Choe, 2016, Yook and Kim, 2017, Nam 2023). In Nigeria CLT is more complex, more time consuming and more demanding because the learner having internalized his mother tongue which now interacts negatively with the learning of the second language, the child always faces severe difficulties. This is due to the fact that the discrepancy between the ideal communicative goals set in the official curriculum and their implementation in actual classrooms coupled with being alienated from the native speakers.

In previous research relating to the implementation of CLT, Li (1998), identified four categories that influence the implementation of CLT. They are teachers, students, the educational system, and the CLT itself. Butler (2011) identified these challenges based on three categories: 'conceptual constraints' concerning the values of and beliefs about CLT, 'classroom-level constraints' regarding the students and teachers in classrooms, and 'societal-institutional level constraints' about the curricula and tests. As such, a comprehensive analysis embracing both teacher-related, student-related factors and institutional-related would be looked into to see as the study contributes to what should be done to improve the implementation of CLT in Nigerian ESL instructional context in the future. To this end, the research questions of the present study are as follows:

Research Questions

1. What are the student-related factors hindering the implementation of communicative language teaching method?

2. What are the teacher-related factors hindering the implementation of communicative language teaching method?

3. What are the institutional-related factors hindering the implementation of communicative language teaching method?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nam (2023) investigated the challenges and constraints of implementing communicative language teaching: teacher-related vs. non-teacher-related factors. The study aimed to discern the exact as opposed to the supposed problems that are taken for granted as obstacles. A total of 95 in-service Korean, North American, Chinese, Uzbek English teachers participated in the study. The results revealed that none of the non-teacherrelated external factors such as educational policy, class size, classroom layout, learners' English proficiency, and learners' motivation, was found to be significant for CLT while the teacher-related internal factors such as teachers' language proficiency, teacher's motivation to teach, years in service, teacher competence, and training in instructional methodology, teacher competence was found to be significant.

Alharbi (2022) explored the challenges facing the communicative language teaching approach in Saudi Arabia. Four broad categories of challenges was adopted from Li's (1998) comprehensive framework in an attempt to

structure the challenges under meaningful labels. The findings revealed that the most frequently observed teacher-related challenges mostly relate to conflicting ideas about CLT, low confidence in these methods, preference for the traditional learning model, focus on developing skills that feature in the exams, and deficiencies in teachers' English. Student-related challenges are found to be their low-level proficiency, passive learning style, lack of motivation to learn the target language, and fear of their marks being negatively affected if they are paired with weaker peers during communicative activities.

Chang and Suparmi (2020) carried out a qualitative study on implementation of communicative language teaching and to investigate factors hindering high school teachers from implementing it. Data were collected using online questionnaire and interview. This questionnaire was administered to 29 senior high school teachers. The findings show that most teachers understand the concept of CLT well. However, there are some obstacles that they need to deal with in implementing CLT the classroom. Teachers experience limited access to the target language's culture, limited time to develop materials for CLT and lack of training in order to improve their teaching skill. Given its importance, more research is still needed to see how this CLT method can be improved in Indonesia teaching context in the future.

A study by Abaussain (2016) focused on exploring the challenges faced by Saudi English teachers in their teaching practice that stop them from fully implementing CLT and a communicative approach in their classrooms. To do so, questionnaires were distributed among state school English language teachers (N=45) and interviews were conducted with English language teachers, educational supervisors, and university lecturers (N=21) to probe the reasons for failing to successfully implement all aspects of CLT. The first of the various reasons was the teachers' teaching method, which was in line with traditional teaching instead of CLT, in which the dominant role in the classroom is that of the teacher, while students appear to have a peripheral role. As a direct consequence, opportunities for interactions between students were minimized, discreet skills with emphasis on grammar and translation were taught, the focus was placed on the final product of teaching instead of focusing on the process of teaching and learning, and instead of promoting cooperative learning, competitive learning was encouraged. The study suggests that the reasons for the above-mentioned shortcomings in teaching conceal two broad factors: the institutional and situational factors like the contents of in-service training programs, examination purposes and classroom structure, and the socio-cultural factors such as the traditional role of teachers in Saudi Arabia, the behaviourist view of education, and the secondary status of English in the Saudi community due to the perception of "English as a threat" to the culture and identity of the country.

Al Asmari (2015) conducted an exploratory study on a large sample of English language teachers (N=100), adopting a questionnaire to uncover the challenges they are facing in creating a CLT environment. The results revealed that the challenges are teachers-based (teachers' misconceptions about CLT focusing exclusively on teaching oral skills and no grammar, teachers lacked the time needed to develop communicative activities and opportunities for professional training despite the in-house continuous professional development programmes), student-based (lack of motivation among students to learn the target language, passive style of learning, resistance to participating in communicative activities, low confidence and preparedness in the classroom, and low-level proficiency) and education policy and the educational system-based challenges (overcrowded classes, classrooms with no audio-visual equipment, lack of materials for communicative activities, lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments, and an existing examination system that was unsuited to CLT).

METHOD

Research Design

This descriptive research was carried out by using a set of questionnaire and interview with 480 English Language teachers. Purposive random sampling was used to choose all the English Language teachers in secondary schools Nigeria. The questionnaire consists of some four sections in with the demographic information of the respondents. The questions were close-ended answers. Nunan (1999) said that close-ended questions enable the participants to accurately reflect what they want to convey. The responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using the descriptive statistical tools of mean and standard deviation.
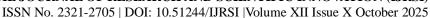
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: What are the student-related factors hindering the implementation of communicative language teaching method?

		Items	M	SD
1.	2	Learner's motivation	3.67	1.35
2.	3	Learner's Attitude to CLT classroom activities	2.23	1.40
3.	e4	Poor Background of Learners in English.	3.02	1.43
4.		Learners' Self-Esteem Issues	3.21	1.67
5.		Resistance to the change from teacher-oriented classroom to the studentoriented classroom	3.39	1.01
6.		They pay more attention to their grammar competence than their communicative skills	3.15	0.46

The results revealed that learner's motivation, attitude to CLT classroom activities, poor background in English, self-esteem issues, resistance to the change from teacher-oriented classroom to the student-oriented classroom and giving more attention to grammar competence over communicative skills could hinder effective implementation of CLT. It aligns with Alharbi (2022) who noted that students were found to show significant resistance to the shift from the teacher-oriented classroom to the student-oriented classroom because they have become accustomed to the traditional classroom structure in which their role is much more passive and "the teacher is expected to give them information directly". Also, Nunan (2004) agrees that learning language is more than just the act of memorizing grammatical rules and vocabularies but a communication tool. In addition, Al Asmari (2015) found out that student-based factors that hinder the effective implementation of CLT are lack of motivation among students to learn the target language, passive style of learning, resistance to participating in communicative activities, low confidence and preparedness in the classroom, and low-level proficiency.

Table 2:What are the teacher-related factors hindering the implementation of communicative language teaching method?

	Items	M	SD
7.	Teacher's proficiency (oral/written)	3.40	0.72
8.	Teacher's Heavy Workload	3.38	0.68
9.	Lack of Adequate Knowledge of CLT Method	3.25	0.88
10.	Lack of effective and efficient Assessment Instrument	3.32	0.86
11.	Preference for the traditional learning model	3.20	0.84
12.	Teacher's Perception of CLT	3.34	0.80

The results revealed that teacher's proficiency, workload and adequate knowledge of CLT could hinder effective implementation of CLT. The demographic information the teachers revealed that only six percent (6%) had adequate knowledge of CLT, 28% had moderate knowledge with 76% lacking adequate knowledge of CLT. Having a larger percentage of English Language teachers lacking adequate knowledge of CLT in Nigeria, makes it more difficult to effectively use the technique/method or motivate learners to adopt it. An impromptu interview with some of the teachers revealed that teachers have preference for the traditional learning model. The teachers also revealed that there are no effective assessment instrument to evaluate the learners of CLT. It aligns with Batawi (2006) that teachers have preference for the use of traditional approach. The findings are consistent with the analysis of Al Asmari (2015) that the challenges of CLT are teachers' misconceptions about CLT, the problem of their workload and opportunities for professional training.

Table 3: What are the institutional-related factors hindering the implementation of communicative language teaching method?

	Items	M	SD
13.	Large Class size	3.31	1.10
14.	Lack of materials for communicative activities	3.03	1.13
15.	Insufficient Time for Teaching	2.89	1.11
16.	Cultural Disparity	2.61	1.08
17.	Lack of effective and efficient Assessment Instrument	2.96	1.02
18.	Low quality of training programs for teachers	3.38	1.08
19.	Excessive Focus on fluency over accuracy	3.00	0.56
20.	Insufficient Time to use the language in a Social Context	3.00	1.18

Institutional-related factors are very critical in the use of CLT method in the classroom. These factors include: the class size, lack of materials for communicative activities, insufficient time for teaching, cultural disparity, low quality of training programs for teachers, excessive focus on fluency over accuracy and insufficient time to use the language in a social context. It agrees with the study by Rahmawati (2019) that teaching CLT have several challenges like the class size and the availability of English materials. It also agrees with the research of Abaussain (2016) that the institutional and situational factors like the contents of in-service training programs, examination purposes and classroom structure, and the socio-cultural factors affect the implementation of CLT method. In the study by Al Asmari (2015) it was revealed that overcrowded classes, classrooms with no audio-visual equipment, lack of materials for communicative activities, and an existing examination system that was unsuited to CLT, key issue detected was low-quality in-house development programs for teachers, as well as textbooks that were not necessarily adjusted to the CLT approach. This, combined with large classes and limited time to develop their communicative activities, often puts teachers in a helpless position in which they are expected to deliver communicative activities, but are not provided with suitable textbooks or necessary training to develop these themselves. Further, even if the problem of their training is removed,

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted factors hindering the implementation of communicative language teaching method in English language classroom in Nigeria. These factors which are categorized into three aspects: student-related factors, teacher-related factors and institutional-related factors revealed that there is a great need to more effort to CLT teaching method since the goal teaching is communicative competence. These efforts range from developing the learner's motivation, giving more attention to communicative skills to prioritizing

teacher's proficiency, reducing their workloads, developing effective assessment instrument to evaluate the learners to developing policy on class size and time for teaching, providing adequate materials for communicative activities, organizing effective training on CLT teaching methods, among other things. It is worthy of note that these efforts can only be effective when there is a collaboration among the three identified factors. Moreover, given the importance of this issue, it is hoped that other researchers may also conduct similar research in the future considering the diversity of culture and languages in Nigeria.

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