

An exploration of the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) Approach by teachers of English language: A case of selected public secondary schools in Chongwe District, Zambia

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Abstract

The study aimed at exploring the implementation of CLT Approach by teachers of English Language in selected secondary schools of Chongwe District. The objective of the study was to explore the extent of the absence of CLT in English Language lessons. The research design employed in this study was a case study and mixed methods approach was used to collect data from a purposively sampled population of forty one participants; all of them teachers of English Language drawn from the six public secondary schools in Chongwe District, Zambia. The instruments used to collect data for the research were structured questionnaires and classroom observation check lists.

The findings of the study revealed that to a very large extent, CLT was absent in the English language lessons. All the lessons were organised around teacher centred, whole class pedagogical activities without noticeable form of communicative activities and CLT instructional procedures. What dominated was the explicit teaching of structure and no opportunities were afforded to the learners to negotiate meaning through engagement in information gap tasks. The text based course books were also pedagogical in nature.

The study provided a range of practical recommendations that included; the need for the trainers of English Language teachers to be practical and not theoretical in as far as training in CLT is concerned. The study also recommended that teachers should be sensitised during Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Meetings so that they are aware of the pedagogical requirements of the English Language syllabi. The other recommendation was that there should be increased funding to schools, the Literature and Languages Department in particular, to support CLT.

Keywords: communicative language teaching approach, communicative competence, implementation, pedagogical

Introduction

Language teaching is a dynamic field of education where several changes in terms of methods and approaches have been implemented over time (Whong, 2011) ^[15]. CLT emerged in the mid-1960s as an attempt to overcome the inadequacies of the structural syllabi, materials and methods (Howatt, 1984) ^[4]. It did not just develop out of linguistic concerns but also as a result of a broader trend in education where active learning through doing and discovery is promoted rather than the passive absorption of bodies of knowledge (Whong, 2011) ^[15]. CLT aims at helping the learners attain communicative competence in both spoken and written language (Richard & Rodgers, 1986) ^[9].

Since 1970s, the scope of CLT has expanded world-wide and from the early eighties to date, the Zambian English Language Syllabi have been guided by the ideals of CLT. The revised Zambian Education Curriculum Framework (2013) ^[7] states that the content, structure and process of teaching English at both Junior and Senior Secondary School levels should go towards developing a learner capable of communicating effectively in both speech and writing (MESVTTE, 2013). Similarly, the syllabi for English Language in their preamble states that the recommended methodological interpretation of the English Language Syllabi is 'functional' and 'communicative' (MESVTTE, 2013).

Nevertheless, results of the studies show that CLT has

encountered implementation challenges in countries where it has been adopted for use (Chang, 2011; Vongxay, 2013; Weimann, 1996; Mareva & Nyota, 2012) ^[1, 13, 14].

Statement of the Problem

National policies and school curricular in the number of contexts where English is taught as Foreign Language (EFL) and Second Language (ESL) have shifted towards CLT because of its wide appeal. This does not mean that the implementation of CLT in these contexts have been easy sailing. As already stated, researchers and scholars have reported hurdles encountered in the implementation of this innovation. (Weimann, 1996; Mareva & Nyota, 2012; Vongxay, 2013; Chang, 2011) ^[14, 13, 1]. In the Zambian context, a serious mismatch between policy and practice has been noted (Munakaampe, 2005) ^[8]. What is not known however, is the extent to which teachers of English Language in Zambia; represented by Chongwe District public secondary school teachers, are not using CLT Approach in their lesson delivery.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the extent of the absence of CLT in the English Language lessons.

Research Objective

Explore the extent of the absence of CLT in the English

Language lessons.

Research Question

To what extent was CLT absent in English Language Lessons?

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study may enlighten the teachers of English Language in Zambia and indeed in many other countries where CLT has been adopted for use on the pedagogical requirements of the English Language Syllabi and sensitise trainers of English Language teachers on the need to be practical and not theoretical in as far as training in CLT is concerned. The Ministry of General Education may also be helped to understand the complexity of introducing CLT so that it gets more focused and efficient in monitoring as well as allocation of resources to schools. Finally, the findings of the study would contribute to the body of knowledge on CLT.

Literature Review

CLT Approach is derived from a multidisciplinary perspective that include; Linguistics, Psychology, Philosophy, Sociology and Educational Research (Savignon, 1991) ^[11]. It is a recent and widely used hybrid approach to language teaching, essentially viewed as progressive rather than traditional. It has no single authority or text on it, or any single model that is universally acceptable as authoritative (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) ^[9]. However, Howatt (1984) ^[4] distinguishes between a 'strong' and 'weak' version of CLT. The weak version stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider programme of language teaching. The 'stronger' version of communication teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of language, but of stimulating the development of language knowledge itself. The former could be described as "learning to use English" and the later entails "using English to learn it" (Howatt, 1984; 279) ^[4].

By and large, CLT traces its roots from the functional view of language as proposed by Wilkins (1972). The goal of language teaching in CLT is to develop what Hymes (1972) ^[5] referred to as 'Communicative Competence', a notion proposed to counter Chomsky's competence/performance distinctions (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) ^[9].

Implementation of CLT Approach.

Implementation of CLT is a complicated issue involving various factors. The findings by Sakui (2004) ^[10] on the extent of the implementation of CLT in Japan reviewed that in overall actual classroom teaching, grammar instruction was central, and far more foregrounded than CLT. The Language of instruction and classroom management was Japanese. Teachers spent most of the class time involved in teacher-fronted grammar explanations, chorus reading, and vocabulary presentations. Students attended to teachers' explanations, learnt to translate at the sentence level, read the textbooks aloud in choral reading, copied vocabulary items in their notebooks, and engaged in sentence manipulation exercises. CLT activities, in which meanings

are negotiated in English seemed to play a much smaller role. The researcher stated that if any time at all was spent on CLT, it was a maximum of five minutes out of fifty.

Similarly, in a case study, Vongxay (2013) ^[13] reviewed a partial implementation of CLT in an English Department in a Lao Higher Educational Institution in New Zealand. All the teachers in the study reported that the department's syllabus was based on grammatical linguistics rather than other skills like speaking, reading and writing. On the other hand, listening and communication subjects were removed from the department's syllabus. The study showed that only 30% of CLT was applied while 70% was still teacher centred.

In another study, Weimann (1996) ^[14] reviewed that CLT was absent from the English classroom in Ciskeian Secondary Schools in the Republic of South Africa. In all the classrooms observed, most activities were organised in terms of a teacher - student/class format focusing on teacher - lead, whole-class activities; supporting a transmission mode of teaching in which little opportunity is provided for natural communication in the classroom. The study also reported that students were not afforded opportunities for initiating discourse and thus played no role in the negotiation and creations of learning opportunities. Students were also offered few opportunities for practicing language skills in an integrated, whole-language manner using sustained speech. The classroom interactions perpetuated the exchange of information which was predicted and artificial. Additionally, the study reported that classroom practice utilised materials that were pedagogic in nature and thus did not exemplify the type of language materials that students were likely to encounter in 'real-world' language environment.

The findings of these studies are remarkable as they set the pace for this study in understanding the complexity involved in implementing CLT. However, the contexts of these studies is different from the present study as English Language is learned as a second language in Zambia and it has been used in the Zambian education sector from pre-colonial days as a medium of instructions in secondary schools. Being a second language, it is spoken in the immediate environment of the learners, meaning that learners have greater opportunities to use English by partaking in the natural communication situation unlike the EFL contexts.

In the ESL context, Mareva and Nyota (2011) ^[6] conducted a study in Masvingo Urban and Peri-Urban Secondary Schools to establish whether the Structural Approach or CLT Approach was used in teaching. The study established that although Zimbabwe Secondary 'O' level English Language Syllabus advocated for the use of CLT Approach, teachers under the study preferred the Structural Approach and related methods and techniques and CLT played a second fiddle. The study concluded that the trend could be as a result of ignorance on the part of teachers of the principles and advantages of CLT, or it could be as a result of conservativeness.

Although different to this study in context, overall approach and design, the researchers brought out a number of issues that this research will build upon in exploring the implementation of CLT in Chongwe District Public Secondary Schools.

In the Zambia context, one remarkable study was done by Munakaampe (2005) ^[8]. The study indicated that regardless

of type and amount of training, teachers were not implementing the CLT Approach and that they did not understand the underlying psychological processes of language learning. It was further found that there were no communicative exercises in the classroom; pupils displayed little activity during the English lessons and the school environment was not conducive for CLT.

The present study has so much to benefit from the findings of the above study in understanding the research problem. It must however, be stated that although the study aimed at establishing the level of implementation of CLT, the instruments used in the research were not comprehensive enough to ascertain the level of implementation taking into account the complexity of CLT. Furthermore, the study looked at CLT at primary level; Grade five to be specific. The current study employs variables from Communicative Language Teaching (COLT) protocol in designing the instruments so that CLT is comprehensively investigated. The study also targets secondary school trained teachers because they specialise in particular subject areas, English Language in this case, unlike primary school teachers who are trained in all the subjects they are to offer at primary school level. The expectations are that secondary school teachers are more grounded in the area of pedagogy and they are more likely to understand and implement CLT better. It must also be stated here that generally, the vocabulary of a pupil at secondary school level is much more advanced than that of a primary school pupil and it is therefore, more likely that engaging them in CLT activities is relatively easier as compared to primary school pupils.

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher employed Case Study research design for in depth understanding of the research problem (Stake, 1995). Mixed Methods Approach of data collection was also used. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative provided an expanded understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2009) [2].

Target Population

The population for this study comprised all teachers of English Language in Chongwe District of Lusaka province.

Sample Procedures

The research used purposive sampling as the group targeted was the most reliable for the study.

Data Collection Procedure

The data for this research was collected through questionnaires and observations. The questionnaires were distributed to all forty-one teachers of English Language in the six public secondary schools of Chongwe District. Enough time for scoring was given to the respondents after which the researcher collected the questionnaires.

From each school, two lessons were observed randomly and that gives a total of twelve lessons that were observed. The observations were conducted in the classroom under natural, non-manipulative setting using an observation checklist. The researcher was a non-participant observer and sat at the back of the room to avoid any interference to the setting. The observed lessons lasted between forty to eighty minutes each and the whole exercise took one month. The observation sheet was used to code the classroom activities

of each lesson and the lessons were also tape recorded.

Data Analysis

The research employed Mixed Study method and therefore, data analysis occurred both within the qualitative and quantitative approach. For qualitative data, the researcher used thematic data analysis (Creswell, 2009) [2]. Before analysis, the data was first organised and this involved transcribing recorded lessons and sorting and arranging the data into different types according to the sources of information. The researcher then read through the data to obtain a general sense of information and to reflect its overall meaning. Data was further analysed with a coding process that generated a small number of themes or categories. These themes were further analysed and the major themes were drawn out.

Although there were slight modifications, the lessons were generally analysed in terms of four parameters outlined in part 'A' of Communication Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) observation sheet and two parameters in part 'B' of the COLT protocol (Frolich, *et al* 1985) [3].

For quantitative data, the data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study used this type of statistical analysis to describe the data set that was collected from the sample in a comprehensive and meaningful way. Individual scores, percentages, frequency counts were reported and presented using tables, charts and figures as a graphical representation of the results to supplement the narrative explanation. Statistical analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for much of the quantitative data.

Findings of the study

1. Classroom Observations

As earlier stated, a total number of twelve lessons were observed randomly from six secondary schools under study. Of these lessons, six were structure lessons, two comprehension, two summary lessons and the other two were composition lessons. Of the structure lessons observed, two lessons were based on the topic 'Contrast' taught to two different Grade Ten classes from two different schools. The structure topic 'Conditional Sentences' and 'Question Tags' were presented to Grade Eleven pupils from two different schools; 'Phrasal Verbs' were taught to one of the Grade Twelve classes at one of the schools and finally, the lesson on vocabulary words 'Best' and 'Favourite' was taught to one of the Grade Eight classes from yet another school.

The comprehension lessons observed were based on the topics 'Child Abuse' and the 'Effects of Smoking on the Body' taught to Grade Eleven pupils. The summary lesson was entitled 'Writing Prose Summary' taught to a Grade Ten class. The composition lesson was taught to a Grade Twelve class and was based on the topic 'Writing a Newspaper Article'. The researcher did not come across any lesson presented on either listening or speaking skills. All the lessons observed were on the skills of reading and writing.

Part A: Classroom events

Lesson procedure

Generally, all the structure lessons observed had a rigid procedure; introduction, presentation of the grammatical rules, oral practice and written practice. In all the six structure lessons observed, the teacher first introduced the

lesson by revising the previous work with the pupils. The teacher then stated the topic and gave grammatical rules to the pupils with examples and wrote the rules on the board for them to copy in their exercise books. For example:

Topic: Three kinds of condition

- Teacher gave the rules for the formation of the three main conditional sentences in tabular form.

Table 1

Kind of condition	Tense in conditional clause	Tense in main clause
Open/likely	Present	Future
Unlikely	Past simple	Conditional
Rejected/impossible	Past perfect	Perfect condition

Topic: Question tags

Grammatical rules

- Affirmative statement-Negative tag.
- Negative statement-Affirmative tag.
- Tense of the tag should correspond to the tense of the statement.
- Auxiliary verb should be repeated in the question tag.
- Need and dare used affirmatively in the statement are not repeated in the tag.
- ‘Used to’ is treated as a full verb rather than an auxilli

Pic: Contrast

- Teacher wrote a list of words used in English Language to express two contrasting ideas. She gave examples for each and wrote them on the board.
- After the examples, teacher asked the pupils to formulate their own sentences using the structures learnt. After the pupils had practiced the structures orally, the teacher gave written exercises. The exercises took different forms but mostly transformations were given.

For comprehension lessons, the general format was the introduction, silent reading of the text by individual pupils or reading loudly by one member of the class. Thereafter, oral questions were asked to assess the pupils’ comprehension of the passage. Comprehension lessons ended with pupils writing an exercise.

The summary lesson observed was centered on the writing of prose summary. The teacher first defined prose summary and gave points on the board on the procedure to follow when writing prose summary for pupils to copy in their exercise books. Finally, the teacher gave a written exercise.

a. Participant Organisation

The analysis from the lesson from the twelve lessons observed revealed that the class activities were organised in terms of a whole class approach which fell into the category of teacher to student or teacher to class (T-S/C). The teachers mainly gave instructions to the whole class and in certain instances teachers could point at individual pupils to give responses to oral questions especially during oral practice exercise. Of all of these lessons observed, no teacher administered group work and only one incident was recorded where pupils were involved in giving choral responses to questions. What was predominant was individual seat work, where by pupils could seat to do work as individuals. At no time during the classroom observations

was pair work used.

a. Content

In virtually all the lessons observed, attention was given to the form of language rather than function, discourse and sociolinguistics. There was also explicit focus on form as illustrated above but some aspects of discourse during comprehensive lessons were noticed. Generally, the topics had a narrow range of reference and in terms of topic control; the teacher exercised tight control over what took place as he dictated the topics to the pupils. There was no time when a teacher relinquished control to the pupils.

b. Student modality

Most of the times, students spent their time listening from the teacher’s explanations. During comprehension exercise, pupils were meant to read texts both silently and aloud. Pupils also engaged in writing response to specific tasks set by the teacher and copying down items and instructions from the board.

c. Materials

The observations showed that teachers only used prescribed courses that were text based and the only time pupils were exposed to the course books was during comprehension and summary exercises. During structure and composition lessons, teachers taught from their own personal notes written on pieces of paper and thereafter, wrote the exercises on the board. An analysis of the texts used for comprehension revealed that such materials could be labeled pedagogic. The texts were not authentic so as to mirror the real language world of the learner. The teacher also ensured that there was close adherence to such materials through high level of control. All the lessons observed did not use language-based realia such as magazines, newspapers, graphic, objects or indeed visual sources around which communicative activities could be built.

Part B: Communication Features

a. Teacher Verbal interaction

In almost all the lessons observed, the teachers consciously used English, the target language. Only one incidence was observed where a teacher used Chinyanja, the regional local language of the province. This was basically done to clarify some concepts that were not well understood by the pupils.

b. Student Verbal Interaction

Pupils used English, the target language as they responded to the teachers’ questions. There was no instance observed where the student initiated discourse. The teacher directed the lessons rigidly. Most speech examples by the students were ‘ultra-minimal’ or ‘minimal’ with few examples of sustained speech. The pupils mostly gave short responses to the teachers’ questions. During the language lessons, the linguistic form used showed limited restriction. Pupils practiced the linguistic items taught on them by the teacher. The amount of student interaction generally was meager and as a result, no attempts were made by other students to incorporate such utterances into verbal feedback. All the lessons taught were marked by a lack of students requesting information. In terms of giving information, students gave teachers predictable replies in response to the teachers’ questions.

2. Questionnaires

In order to cross check the findings of the classroom observation, the questionnaires were administered to 41

teachers under study. The results of the questionnaire showed similar results as indicated in the tables below:

Table 2: Assessment of the Presence of CLT Activities in the Classrooms

Activity	Always		Frequently		Seldom		Never		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	Percent
Whole class discussions	2	4.9	23	56.1	15	36.6	1	2.4	41	100.0
Group work	2	4.9	9	22.0	29	70.7	1	2.4	41	100.0
Individual work	38	92.7	1	2.4	2	4.9	0	0.0	41	100.0
Role play	2	4.9	0	0.0	5	12.2	34	82.9	41	100.0
Co-operative language games	0	0.0	1	2.4	1	2.4	39	95.1	41	100.0
Picture strips discussions	1	2.4	2	4.9	1	2.4	37	90.2	41	100.0
Rewriting scrambled sentences	2	4.9	2	4.9	2	4.9	35	85.4	41	100.0
Debate	0	0.0	12	29.3	16	39.0	13	31.7	41	100.0
Dialogue	0	0.0	4	9.8	11	26.8	26	63.4	41	100.0
Choral activities	7	17.1	6	14.6	7	17.1	21	51.2	41	100.0

The respondents were also asked to state how they considered some teaching techniques basing on the variables ‘very important,’ quiet important, ‘sometimes important’

and ‘not important’. Below is the tabulation of their responses:

Table 3: Assessment of the Teaching Techniques Used in the Lespsons

Technique	Very Important		Quite Important		Sometimes important		Not important		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	Percent (%)
Provide guidance	36	87.8	1	2.4	2	4.9	2	4.9	41	100.0
Exercise absolute classroom control	37	90.2	1	2.4	1	2.4	2	4.9	41	100.0
Explicit focus on form	35	85.4	3	7.3	0	0.0	3	7.3	41	100.0
Explicit focus on function	9	22.0	10	24.4	18	43.9	4	9.8	41	100.0
Explicit focus on discourse	6	14.6	4	9.8	19	46.3	12	29.3	41	100.0
Explicit focus on sociolinguistics	2	4.9	1	2.4	13	31.7	25	61.0	41	100.0
Routine classroom reference to dates	21	51.2	12	29.3	5	12.2	3	7.3	41	100.0
Routine reference to external information	1	2.4	2	4.9	12	29.3	26	63.4	41	100.0
Reference to controversial public issues	1	2.4	0	0.0	13	31.7	27	65.9	41	100.0

The respondents were also asked how often in their lessons presentation they allowed certain procedures in terms of

information gap activities and below were their responses:

Table 4: Assessment of the classroom instructional procedures

Procedure	Always		Frequently		Seldom		Never		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	Percent (%)
Allow pupils to exchange information	0	0.0	3	7.3	7	17.1	31	75.6	41	100.0
Allow pupils to decide on the direction of classroom activity	3	7.3	0	0.0	6	14.6	32	78.0	41	100.0
Allow pupils to move away from the topic	1	2.4	1	2.4	5	12.2	34	82.9	41	100.0
Allow pupils to initiate a discussion	1	2.4	3	7.3	6	14.6	31	75.6	41	100.0
Assess learners before a lesson	4	9.8	3	7.3	18	43.9	16	39.0	41	100.0
Teach English skills of listening etc.	4	9.7	2	4.6	6	14.6	29	70.7	41	100.0
Teach English from other subjects	1	2.4	0	0.0	2	4.9	38	92.7	41	100.0
Use authentic materials	1	2.4	12	29.3	8	19.5	20	48.8	41	100.0
Develop learning materials on specific needs	1	2.4	1	2.4	5	12.2	34	82.9	41	100.0

Discussion of findings

Lesson Procedure

The study showed that for all the structure lessons observed, a rigid three phase sequence known as Presentation, Practice, and Production (P-P-P) cycle was followed. The teachers first presented the new grammar structure by means of giving grammatical rules with examples and this was followed by oral practice as pupils practiced in a controlled context through question and answer techniques. The teachers asked specific questions based on the structure learnt and the pupils supplied answers accordingly. The lessons ended with the pupils writing exercises were they practiced the learnt structures in a controlled way. The P-P-P lesson structure is typical of the Situational

Approach to language teaching. The assumptions on which it is built have been strongly criticised in recent years especially in the face of CLT Approach (Skehan, 1996). The variety of classroom activities and exercise types under CLT makes the description of typical classroom procedures for CLT not feasible. The grammar based methodologies such as the P-P-P lesson format have given way to functional and skills based teaching, and accuracy activities such as drill and grammar practice have been replaced by fluency activities based on interactive small-group work (Richards, 2006). It must be noted however, that the grammar procedures are not rejected but are reinterpreted and extended in CLT. The new teaching points in CLT are normally introduced with dialogues, followed by controlled

practice of the main grammatical patterns. The teaching points are then contextualised through situational practice to serve as introduction to a freer practice activity, such as a role play (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) ^[9]. Nevertheless, Savignon (1972) rejected the notion that learners must gain control over individual skills such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary before applying them in communicative tasks. She advocated for the provision of communicative practice from the start of instructions. This is a major controversy of CLT at the level of classroom procedure.

Participant Organisation

The results from the classroom observations showed that teachers organised their classrooms in terms of a teacher to student/class format, focusing on teacher led, and whole class activities. Participant organization was linked to teacher centered activities which encouraged learners to be reactive. Triangulation of the findings by way of questionnaires gave similar results. The statistical analysis showed that 56.1% of teachers frequently engaged students in the whole class activities. For group work, 56.1% indicated that they use group work seldom and for individual work, 92.9% indicated that they used it always while for those that had never used role play were 82.9%. Another significant figure 95.1% was for respondents that stated that they have never used co-operative language games in their lessons. Other significant number of 92.5%, 92.1% and 65% was for the respondents that stated they have never engaged pupils in picture strips discussion, rewriting scrambled sentences and dialogues respectively. The above stated findings are against the premises of CLT that promote co-operative rather than individualistic approach to learning (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) ^[9]. CLT does not encourage teacher fronted teaching. It is a learner centered and experience based approach (Whong, 2011) ^[15]. Although there were some indications in the questionnaire that teachers used group work (56.1%), actual classroom practices observed showed contrary results as no single lesson observed had actually used it. Similar results were reported by Munakaampe (2005) ^[8] and Weimann (1996) ^[14].

Content

In all lessons observed, results showed that structure lessons dominated and the focus was the teaching of form rather than function, discourse or sociolinguistics. Admittedly, oral drilling as is the case of some traditional methods (Audio-lingual) did not arise in all the lessons observed. However, similarities in the way oral practice was conducted were observed. The question and answer technique was employed and was rigidly controlled. The structural elements were not contextualised and learners were at no point given an opportunity to discover rules themselves. Stress was placed on the mastery of grammatical rules that were written on the board for pupils to copy in their exercise book and study. The classroom practice clearly reflected the traditional methods of teaching.

To a very narrow extent, it was also noted that some aspects of discourse during comprehension exercise were noticed but no functional or sociolinguistics elements were noted. This as illustrated in Bachman's (1990) Communicative Competence Model is against CLT practices. For learners to gain communicative competence, several elements of

language such as sociolinguistic must be covered. The researchers expectations were that in comprehension lessons for example, learners would gain an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, roles, relationships, shared information of the participants and the communicative purpose for their interaction but the sociolinguistic elements were virtually absent in all the lessons. It was also observed that teachers firmly controlled their classroom and dictated the topics to the pupils. Pupils did not have any influence on the topic which in all cases had narrow reference.

The results of the questionnaire showed similar results. They indicated that 88.4% of the respondents focused explicitly on the form of the language. The scores for those that regarded the teaching of function discourse and sociolinguistic as very important was at 22%, 14.6% and 4.9% respectively. The statistical results also showed that teachers have a very narrow reference as only 2.4% and another 2.4% acknowledged that they considered the reference to external and controversial public issue as very important.

The outlined findings are not in conformity with CLT tenets. Its only traditional language teaching methods that gave priority to grammatical competence as the basis of language proficiency and the approach used in this regard was deductive as students were presented with grammatical rules and were made to practice them in a controlled manner (Richard, 2006). In CLT, the approach is inductive. Students are given examples of sentences containing a grammar rule and are asked to work out the rule for themselves. Primacy is given to the language function and structural aspects of language is secondary (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) ^[9].

Although the results from the questionnaires indicated that at least some of the teachers believed that CLT promoted realistic English Language practice, in classroom teaching, it was observed that they resort to structural methods. The dominance of structure lessons could probably be attributed to among other factors, the grammar oriented examinations. It is also demanded in CLT that learners should take ownership of their learning development instead of relying heavily on the teacher or the classroom materials (Whong, 2011) ^[15]. This was not the case in the lesson observed. Pupils could not meaningfully participate in the act of learning and did not have any influence on the topic. This could be emanating from traditional methods of teaching where teachers are seen as 'all knowing beings' and the roles of pupils is to receive the information as it is given to them. The lessons as earlier indicated, were all narrow or limited in reference. References were made to the pupils' immediate environment and circumstances and they were not afforded an opportunity to think out of the box. The comprehension, composition and summary lessons were based on text based models and could not support individual creativity and personal expression expected in the CLT Approach.

Student Modality

CLT approach is also characterized by an integrated skill approach. A single activity or set of activities in a CTL classroom is likely to make use of all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Whong, 2011) ^[15]. From the classroom observations, pupils spent their time listening from the teacher's explanation. In the questionnaires, teachers were asked how often they taught these skills intergratively. The statistical results show that 72.5% never

did that. The fact that pupils listened more does not mean that listening skills were taught more than other skills. As earlier indicated, no lesson was specifically taught on listening. The teaching of writing skill dominated all the lessons observed,

Material

Under the banner of CTL, it is expected that authentic materials are used for teaching because they provide exposure to real language, (Richards, 2006). Authentic materials include language based realia such as maps, pictures, symbols, graphs and charts. Different kinds of objects can also be used to support CLT such as model (Richards & Rodgers, 1996). From the classroom observation, the text based course books that were used for summary and comprehension were not authentic but pedagogical in nature. In many cases, the teachers did not use text books but just gave abstract points especially during composition and structure lessons. It was expected for example, that the composition topic 'Article writing' could have called for the use of authentic materials such as newspapers or magazines. Instead, the teacher just wrote points on how to write an article on the board for pupils to copy. Equally, topics such as contrast could have called for the use of real objects. The possible justification could probably be that teachers are too busy to plan for CLT activities.

Communicative features (teacher verbal & student verbal interactions)

Generally, from the classroom observation and questionnaires teachers used English, the target language. The teaching in all the classes was not communicative in nature and as such pupils were not engaged in information gap activities. Equally, pupils were passive as they only listened attentively to the teacher. The pupils' speech was ultra-minimal or minimal in all the lessons observed. Pupils' only gave short answers to the teachers' questions as they were not engaged in communicative activities. The findings were similar to Munakaampe (2005)^[8].

Conclusion and recommendations

The results obtained through questionnaires and classroom observations showed that CLT to a very large extent is not used by secondary school teachers of English Language in Chongwe District. The classrooms were organised around teacher-centred, teacher-led, whole class pedagogical activities without any noticeable form of communicative activities and CLT instructional procedure. Pupils were never given any opportunity to initiate discourse and therefore, playing any role in negotiation and creation of learning opportunities. The language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing were never taught in an integrative way. More so, of all the lessons observed, only reading and writing skills were taught. What dominated was the explicit teaching of structures. Learners were not immersed in an authentic input so that the structure of language reflected the functional or communicative uses. In all the lessons observed, the structures were introduced as some abstract, predetermined set of grammatical constraints and a rigid three-phase sequence known as p-p-p cycle, typical of a Situational Approach. Presentation of grammatical rules was followed by controlled oral practice of the structure and thereafter, controlled written practice.

The exchange of information within the classroom was mostly predictable and artificial and this was in form of teacher-led instructions. The material used which were mainly text based prescribed course books were all pedagogic in nature and no realia were used. From these findings, a conclusion was therefore drawn that CLT Approach to a very large extent is not used in English Language lessons in Chongwe District Public Secondary Schools.

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

1. The ministry of General Education should begin conducting in-service training so that teachers who may not be aware of CLT are sensitised on the approach in vogue. The teachers who may be aware of CLT also need to be sensitised also so that they get committed to the approach and implement it correctly.
2. The trainers of English Language teachers should endeavor to prepare student teachers adequately not only theoretically but also practically by giving them frequent opportunities for exposure to CLT approach during their period of training.
3. There should be increased funding to schools and the department of literature and languages in particular so that materials and equipment may be procured.
4. The monitoring of schools by standards officers should be effectively done so that teachers are guided on the pedagogical requirements of the syllabus.
5. The government of the Republic of Zambia should consider building more schools or expanding already existing schools so that they control over enrolment.

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