Challenges Teachers Face in the Use of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach in the Teaching Listening and Speaking Lessons in Lugrari District, Kenya

Anusu Omondi Maryslessor[1], P. L. Barasa[2], Carolyne A. Omulando[3]

[1]Moi University, School of Education, P. O. Box 3900-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

[2]Moi University, School of Education, P. O. Box 3900-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

[3]Moi University, School of Education, P. O. Box 3900-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

Abstract: *Teachers face a number of challenges in teaching listening and speaking in languages. These include students' lack of motivation for developing communicative competence; low English proficiency, and resistance to class participation. In addition to these are teachers' misconceptions, lack of training in CLT combined with deficiencies in sociolinguistic competence, little time for developing materials for communicative classes, and large classes. Other difficulties include grammar based examinations; insufficient funding; and lack of support. The study sought to find out the challenges faced in the use of the CLT approach for teaching Listening and Speaking lessons among teachers in Lugari District in Kenya. The study was grounded on Dell Hymes' theory of communicative competence. The descriptive research design was adopted, with direct observation and interview methods of data collection being used. Note-taking and tape-recording were used to record class proceedings and interviews. A total of twelve secondary schools were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Fourteen teachers of English were involved. A descriptive analysis of data was done. Frequency tables were used to highlight the data. This helped to establish the extent to which CLT was used. The study revealed that the major challenge lay on time, and wide syllabus. These, together with the large classes limited the teachers ability to involve learners in meaningful participatory activities. The pressure for formal examinations made the teacher concentrate on training and drilling the learners on how to pass the exams at the expense of communicative competence. The teachers chose to teach the learners how to pass exams and not how to use English in different situations. The result of this is that the learner will not be able to speak English both in school and after school. A teacher whose aim is to cover the syllabus will be unwilling to follow an approach that does not recognize that second language learning in a class room set- up is guided by what has already been prescribed. To such a teacher CLT is a waste of time. Tasks should be formulated by students themselves because learner- initiated questions have the advantage that will lead the learner to develop those strategies for understanding which will ultimately take him beyond the tutelage of the teacher. These questions should be answered by fellow students.*

Keywords: Challenges, Teachers, Communicative Language Teaching Approach, Listening, Speaking Lessons, Kenya.

1. Introduction

The communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence [1]. The purpose of CLT is to provide the learner with unrestrained access to the social, cultural and pragmatic aspects of language.

CLT aims at achieving communicative competence. **Communicative competence** is defined as competence in three areas of language learning: grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. CLT aims at achievement of the grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. **Strategic competence** aims at being able to express oneself successfully in a conversation and overcoming any difficulties or challenges that may occur which may lead to communication breakdown. It can be enhanced by developing skills such as using fillers, going off the point, paraphrasing and circumlocution. **Grammatical competence** includes knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar, semantics and phonology.

Canale and Swain [2] point out that grammatical competence will be an important concern for any communicative approach whose goals include providing learners with knowledge on how to determine and express accurately the literal meaning of sentences. Communication activities that focus on these three skills help learners build their confidence level, improve creative thinking skills and augment linguistic creativity [3].

Linguists have criticized other methods of teaching language, especially those that focused on helping students produce grammatically correct sentences. This is because accuracy of form was promoted rather and gave rise to another weak method. This was the translation method that failed to promote meaning, which is essential in improving fluency and effectiveness in speaking and a precursor to effective communication skills [4].

Since the 1960s, several linguists have commented on the social aspect of language learning. Hymes [5] proposes the term communicative competence that defined language as a social behaviour, which should be learned in a social context by observing sociolinguistic norms of behaviour. Helt [6] adds that "communicative competence was the social rules of

language use, the ability to receive, understand, and produce suitable and comprehensible messages…" (p. 256). Savignon [7] reiterates that communicative competence is important for all language learners and requires an understanding of socio-cultural contexts in which language is used. In the past, learners have demonstrated an inability to communicate in a second language in spite of traditional classroom learning activities, thus indicating that form alone was inadequate in learning a language and that function is equally important.

Increasing demands on learners creates the need for learners to be able to exchange their ideas and information, communicate their feelings, express themselves logically, and discuss the meanings of their utterances effectively [7]. Communication should enable learners to negotiate meanings effectively and efficiently. In today's business and job market, the importance of communicative skills has increased tremendously. The scope of CLT in social context has expanded to all countries over the last four decades.

Nunan [8] points out that in recent years, CLT has grown in importance in language teaching methodology. CLT grew in popularity among language teachers when they realized that traditional teaching methods were unsatisfactory and inefficient in enhancing the communicative ability of the second language learners. As an extension of the notional-functional syllabus, CLT also places great emphasis on helping students use the target language in a variety of contexts and places great emphasis on learning language functions.

Piepho (as cited in Richards & Rodgers [1]) discusses the following levels of objectives in a communicative approach:

1) An integrative and content level (language as a means of expressions)
2) A linguistics and instrumental level (language as a semiotics system and an object of learning)
3) An affective level of interpersonal relationship and conduct (language as a means of expressing values and judgements about oneself and others)
4) A level of individual needs (remedial learning based on error analysis)
5) A general education level of extra-linguistics goal (language learning within the school curriculum)

Originally there was the Wilkins' [9] notional syllabus model which was criticized as merely replacing one kind of a list (e.g. a list of grammar items) with another (a list of notions and functions). It specified products, rather than communicative processes. There are several proposals and models for what a syllabus might look like in communicative language teaching. Yalden (as cited in Richards & Rodgers [1]) describes the major current communicative syllabus type. Richards and Rodgers [1] summarize a modified version of Yalden's classification of communicative syllabus type as follows:

a) Type of Learning and Teaching Activities
The range of activities is extensive, what matters is that the activities/exercises should enable learners to attain the communicative objectives of the curriculum, engage in such communicative objectives of the curriculum, engage in

communication, and require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing negotiation of measuring and interaction.

b) Learner's Role
Discussing about learner role, Breen and Candlin (as cited in Richards & Rodgers [1]) examines the learner's role within CLT as negotiator between the self, the learning process and the object of learning, emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedure and activities which the group undertakes.

c) The Teacher's Role
According to Breen and Candlin (as cited in Richards & Rodgers [1]), the teacher has two main roles in CLT: first, to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and text; second, to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. Other roles assumed for teachers are needs analyst, counsellor and group process manager.

d) The Role of Instructional Materials
A wide variety of materials have been used to support communicative approaches to language teaching. Practitioners of CLT view materials as a way of influencing quality of classroom interaction and language use. Richards and Rodgers [1] consider three kinds of materials currently used in CLT, they are: text-based materials, task-based materials and reality.

1.1 Characteristics of CLT

CLT is usually characterized as a broad approach to teaching rather than as a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. As such, it is more often defined by a list of general principles or features. One of the most recognized of these lists is Nunan's [8] five features of CLT:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning management process.
4. An enhancement of the Learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link language learning with language activities

Krashen [10], in a *RELC Journal* and quoting Galloway (1993), says that CLT has been defined as an approach that makes use of real life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life.

According to this definition, the CLT approach is implicitly based on the comprehensive output Hypothesis [11]. The view that we acquire language when we try to produce it, fail to make ourselves understood, and keep trying until we

achieve communicative success when we finally get it right. It is upon this premise that the study based in assessing the activities and roles the learners played. By considering these two the study hoped to find learners who were struggling tirelessly to use language without giving up.

Since CLT emphasizes on 'task-oriented, student-centred' language teaching practice, it offers an interactive, harmonious relationships between teacher and student. This is as opposed to the traditional education to kind of master-servant relationship. It also emphasizes the learner's cognitive ability and operational capabilities, which allow the students themselves to think about and express their views, thus trained in real life the ability to use language to communicate. Students' interest is also greatly enhanced through use of simulated scenarios. They move closer to life and become the main character.

CLT starts from a theory of language communication. The goal of language teaching according to this theory is to develop what Hymes [12] refers to as communicative competence. In Hymes' view, the person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use.

According to Panda and Stroupe [13], communicative language teaching, which focuses on both the structural and functional characteristics of language learning, is an approach that is uniquely suited to aid one goal of student-centred language instruction. This is to increase the communicative opportunities students have during any class session, particularly in large classes (using pair and group work). Additionally, teachers can engage students throughout a course by using project work with groups, based on topics or issues of interest to students.

According to Johnson and Johnson (as cited in Richards & Rodgers [1]), there are five core characteristics that underlie current applications of communicative methodology. They are:

1. Appropriateness: Language used reflects the situations of its use and must be appropriate to that situation depending on the setting, the roles of participants, and purpose of the communication.
2. Message focus: Learner needs to be able to create and understand messages, that is, real meanings. Hence the focus on information sharing and information transfer in CLT activities.
3. Psycholinguistics processing: CLT activities seek to engage learners in the use of cognitive and other processes that are important factors in second language acquisition.
4. Risk taking: Learners are encouraged to make guesses and learn their errors. By going beyond what they have been taught they are encouraged to employ a variety of communication strategies.
5. Free practice: CLT encourages the use of holistic practice involving the simultaneous use of a variety of sub-skills, rather than practicing individual skills one at a time.

1.1.1. Language Instruction/Trends in the Classroom

The Bullock report (Des, as cited in Pollard and Triggs, 1997) emphasizes the critical role of language in learning and suggests that all teachers should be seen as language teachers. This has sometimes been taken to mean the shared responsibility of all teachers for improving their pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation. Such goals are important and in some schools is the subject of policies for language and skill development across the curriculum. They go on to suggest that learning involves using language to engage with and order experience so that new ways of understanding and presenting reality are developed. We learn through language and we express our understanding in language.

How best then can we enable pupils to become confident members of these new language communities? The question can be answered by considering how teachers and pupils use language in their interactions in the classroom. They say that embedded in the nature of the classroom heavily is on 'cued elicitation' (where to be 'right' the pupils had to guess what the teacher was thinking) and teacher's main concern was to get through the set of planned activities. There are echoes here of reasons advanced for the predominance of the transmission mode [14]. They point out to teacher's needs to keep pupils on task and under control and also to emphasize the 'basics' and performance rather than depth of understanding.

For the author's of both studies the issues have wider implications. In making the ethical decision to prepare pupils for choice and responsibility, teachers implicitly choose also an interpretation view of learning. "Teaching in which transmission predominates is the negation of educating for living" [15].

A rapidly changing society requires pupils to learn to be flexible, adaptable, multi-skilled problem-solvers who can apply learning in new situations. At the same time there is emphasis on qualifications, examination success, standards and statistical comparison of results all linked explicitly or by inference to economic and moral revival. In addition, the National Curriculum is expressed in subjects and underpinned by the idea of cultural transmission. In making choices about classroom communication, teachers are thus balancing a number of potentially conflicting demands and the decisions they make about 'who does the talking will inevitably reflect their values, beliefs and responses to some of these unresolved dilemma'.

It is good to collect data rather than rely on impressions. A reflective teacher needs to investigate how much time is spent in talking and listening in a whole class teaching session. Ask questions like: How much talking is there? Who is doing the talking? Are there differences between boy/girls, high/low attainers? What is the teacher talking about? What is the pupil talk about? Information of this kind can highlight the pattern of talk in a classroom. It can often reveal aspects which surprise us, because it is so difficult to be aware of how much we talk, to whom and why, while we are engrossed in the process of teaching itself.

There is plenty of evidence that, in the context of curriculum pressures, large class sizes and the demands of assessment, parity of attention is difficult to achieve. One feature which often causes problems is that there are variations in both the quantity and quality of teacher attention which is given to difficult categories of pupils.

1.1.2. The Use of CLT in Kenya

An observation of the roles played by English language teachers is one of the tasks in this study. This is meant to establish whether the teacher is conversant and abreast with modes of teaching that are recommended. Of specific interest in this study is the teaching of listening and speaking, through the CLT approach which is learner-centred. Sifuna [16] states that in order to develop learners' speaking and writing abilities, there is need for language education. It is the language education that is of interest in this study – what modes of teaching do teachers use in teaching languages? The study sought to find out if CLT is used in teaching listening and speaking.

Competence in all aspects of language enables the student to perform in all other subjects. In addition, the school leaver will require good English in a large variety of professional, commercial and day-to-day transactions in Kenya and the international environment [17]. As a medium of instruction and an official language in Kenya, fluency in both written and oral communication in English is emphasized. In order to achieve fluency students must be encouraged to habitually use the language while in and out of school [18]. Furthermore, schools need to set aside time for debates and public speaking competitions. This would enable students to:

1. Practice what they have learnt
2. Asses themselves in terms of improvement in spoken language
3. Compare their competence in speech.

Whereas fluency in speech serves vital functions for secondary school leavers, the teaching of oral communication in Kenya remains a problem. This calls for a conscious effort to improve it. What is more is that oral skills are now examinable unlike in the past.

Studies conducted on communication in Kenya show that although the government is committed to train its teachers [19], the attainment of oral communication objectives in institutions of learning is still questionable. Secondary school students for example tend to face speech problems. This undermines the relevance of training given in speech work. Barasa and Ong'ondo [20] report in their study, *Impact of Drama on English Language Teaching*, which despite the objectives and activities of English, most secondary school leavers in Kenya cannot speak nor write competently in the English language. According to them, this fact has been expressed by a number of scholars, educators, government officials, employers, politicians and journalists. KNEC has confirmed this general incompetence in communication. In Paper 1, which tests listening and speaking, KNEC reports that in 2006 exam, out of the maximum score of 60, the mean score was 30.71. This was a mere average mark. They also comment that students of language be exposed to varied situations of language creative enough to manipulate language to suit different situations.

Barasa and Ong'ondo [20] quote Mbiti, a onetime chief inspector of schools as saying that the development of competence depends to a large extent on whether the students are given sufficient opportunity to become productively involved in practical language-using situations. Many schools in Kenya (and elsewhere too) fail to provide such opportunities. Their study further reveals that teaching of language is mostly done for linguistic competence and not communicative competence. Apparently, communicative skills are inadequately represented in language courses. Barasa and Ong'ondo [20] report significant differences between the Drama students and non-drama student in speaking, writing and consequently communicative competence. These revelations are very relevant to the current study which is arguing for the use of drama and other forms in a CLT class as a means towards achieving competence in listening and Speaking.

Bigambo [21], in *The Role of Speaking and Writing in Communicative Competence*, notes that communicative competence could be achieved through guided practice in Speaking and Writing. However, he notes that in Kenyan Secondary school classrooms, learning language for examination purposes seems to be the only reality. Bigambo's study revealed that communicative competence can be achieved through guided practice. Through CLT, the teacher will act as the facilitator or guide leading learners who are practicing language in a bid to achieve communicative competence.

1.2 Challenges in the Use of CLT

Li [22] cites difficulties faced by teachers and EFL students in Korea when attempting to introduce a communicative approach as including students' lack of motivation for developing communicative competence; low English proficiency, and resistance to class participation. In addition to these are teachers' misconceptions; lack of training in CLT combined with deficiencies in sociolinguistic competence; little time for developing materials for communicative classes, and large classes. Other difficulties cited include grammar based examinations; insufficient funding, and lack of support.

1.2.1. Criticism against CLT

Some researchers have criticized the CLT approach by arguing that a communicative curriculum, however well conceived, cannot by itself guarantee meaningful communication in the classroom because communication is what may or may not be achieved through classroom activity. It cannot be embodied in an abstract specification.

Data-based, classroom oriented investigations conducted in various contexts by various researchers such as Kumaravadivelu [23] and Nunan [24] observe that form was more prominent than function and grammatical accuracy activities dominated communicative fluency ones. They conclude that there i growing evidence that, in a communicative classroom, interactions may, in fact, not be

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very communicative after all. Kumaravadivelu [23] has analyzed lessons taught by teachers and confirmed these findings: even teachers who are committed to CLT can fail to create opportunities for genuine interaction in the classroom.

Some researchers connect several features of CLT to earlier methods such as the direct method and audio-lingual method. In fact, a detailed analysis of the principles and practices of CLT would reveal that it too adhered to the same fundamental concepts of language teaching as the audio-lingual method it sought to replace, namely the linear and additive view of language learning and the presentation practice production vision of language teaching.

These and other reports suggest that, in spite of the positive features mentioned earlier, CLT offers perhaps a classic case of a child centred based pedagogy that is out of sync with local linguistic, educational, social, cultural and political exigencies. The result has been a gradual erosion of its popularity, paving way for a renewed interest in task based language teaching (TBLT), which, according to some is just CLT by another name. The task-based language teaching approach uses a work plan that requires a learner to process languages practically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resource, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world.

According to Bax [25], CLT has served the teaching profession for many years. One of the reasons for its popularity, as described by Mitchell [26], for example, was its function as a corrective to perceived shortcomings with other approaches and methods. While it has, to some extent, achieved that aim, traditional methods still prevail in many parts of the world, and the benefits of an emphasis on communication are widely accepted in principles by professions everywhere. According to Bax, there is an assumption that a country without CLT is somehow backward. It is assumed that CLT is not only modern but is in fact the only way to learn a language properly.

The aim in teaching a language is to open up its resources to the learner so that he or she may find the right words and sentences to convey the meaning intended. The call is for eclecticism and for building up language pedagogy based on constant observation, evaluation of actual teaching and interdisciplinary co-operation. The critics of CLT are, therefore, on the right track as their criticism helps build on a time-tested approach to teaching language which this paper finds still very valuable in. The study dealt with listening and speaking. How best can these two skills be learnt? The learners should be given opportunities to practice the language?

All the CLT user needs to do is to borrow a little from other approaches like the TBLT approach which allows the learner to pay attention to meaning, engage with grammar, include pragmatic properties, use authentic communication,

emphasize on the importance of social interaction and integrate language skills. What matters is that the learner is communicating efficiently and effectively at the end of the day. Some have actually argued that TBLT is just CLT by another name.

Recent articles in the *ELT Journal* offer interesting debates on CLT. Drawing on a study of teaching beliefs and implementation of CLT in Vietnam, it is argued that inherent in CLT is a view of language learning and teaching that most teachers aspire to. In Bangladesh, in a bid to improve the quality of ELT, teachers of English have been encouraged, even required to adopt a CLT approach. To facilitate the successful implementation of these changes, besides introducing local training programs to familiarize teachers with CLT, teachers of English from Bangladesh have also been sent overseas, especially to English speaking west, for further training. He argues that it is time to replace CLT as the central paradigm in language teaching with a context approach which places context at the heart of the profession. He argues that the dominance of CLT has led to the neglect of one crucial aspect of language pedagogy, namely the context in which that pedagogy takes place. Bax [25], in fact, concludes his criticism by suggesting an eclectic approach which may well be the best way to deal with a varied classroom where the context approach is given prominence.

In response to this criticism, the author wishes to point out that, in a bid to demonize CLT, Bax [25], in fact exalts it. His main quarrel is that CLT is popular and is considered to be generally 'the way we should teach' in the world. Surely many scholars must have seen the benefits of this approach. In addition, the purely context approach vouched for by Bax could interfere with the standard variety of English. After all English is considered an international lingua-franca. Following Bax's advice could lead to very many varieties of English that could end up confusing the world speaker of English.

Bax's other argument that CLT emphasizes on communication, adds weight to this paper. The paper argues for an approach that will enhance listening and speaking, i.e. oral communication. The learners should talk so that the teacher gets to hear their weaknesses and strength. The teachers will then design correct remedial exercises and provide more opportunities for practice. The issue of ignoring content by the CLT users is merely an error of omission which can be rectified and CLT remains prominent in Kenya, and specifically in Lugari District. After all Bax does not argue that CLT is useless. He only indirectly suggests an additional factor to the factors in learning a language that is methodology, lexis and content. Task-based learning is a more recent refinement of CLT.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The nature of the language is strictly functional and its purpose is to promote communication. Communication needs both the material to be communicated and the medium to be used to communicate the material. Although oral skills are vital, most learners exhibit lack of mastery of spoken English. Outside the classroom most students use indigenous languages and Sheng at school. Arguing out the case for the

use of indigenous languages, Rono *et al.* [27] say people prefer these to English as they are faster and easier to communicate in. It has also been found out that people code-switch for ease of expression [28]. This explains the apparent minimal use of English.

Emphasis is laid upon the skills of Listening and Speaking because they form a base to the acquisition of the other two skills of reading and writing. To be able to speak, one has to listen. To read and write, one begins by listening and speaking. The two are necessary life skills. Indeed in this study, teachers have attested to this. The Ministry of Education Secondary English Teacher's Handbook points out that wrong forms of spoken English have, over time, become institutionalized in society. They advised that the teacher should therefore endeavour to provide the learner with adequate opportunities to listen to good models of spoken language. The learners should also be provided with ample opportunities to speak English.

The teacher needs to ensure that appropriate opportunities are provided for a learner to develop Listening and Speaking skills. They recommend that reciting poems, telling stories, discussing contemporary issues, debating, dramatizing, performing riddles, role playing and speech drills can facilitate the acquisitions of these two skills in meaningful context. The teaching of listening and speaking skills is the most neglected area in the English program for secondary schools. This is partly explained by the manner of testing. It should be noted that before 2006, these areas were not tested in the final examination. From 2006, they have been examined under paper one.

The nature of examination, however, does not encourage aspects of CLT like role play, dialogue, debate, public speaking, dictation, listening comprehension and others. This is because in the KCSE exam the questions on areas such as dialogue and homophones are leading. Stress and intonation also score very few marks. This, therefore, tempts the teacher to ignore this area and yet oral skills are very important in life. There is need to make the teachers realise that the two skills should not just be taught for purposes of passing exams but for achievement of necessary life skills. Indeed one objective of teaching English is to enable the learner to speak accurately, fluently, confidently and appropriately in a variety of contexts.

CLT which advocates for the actual use of language to do things would be the best approach to take in teaching Listening and Speaking [5]. This could be interpreted to mean that a learner-centred approach that allows learners to debate, discuss, and hold impromptu speeches, role play, dramatize, request, question, answer, direct, advice and do many other things in English would be the best. On the other hand, while the learner does all these things, the teacher takes a peripheral role, becoming the facilitator, the coach, the observer or co-participant. He is not the man or woman at the centre of the action.

The teacher of English has responsibility to the pupils beyond the examination. Outside the classroom, in the institutes of high education and, ultimately, in their respective work places the pupils will need to use and understand English. Surely the teacher must try to equip pupils with the necessary skills to participate in effective communication in the English language in real life, too.

At present most of the Listening and Speaking skills that go on in the classroom might be said to be incidental, in that it often consists of the general teacher talk of the classroom and lesson management [18]. A general look at the Kenyan classroom by researchers such as Theuri [29], Juma [30] and Makhulo [31] reveals that this statement is true. The Kenyan teacher is the man/woman at the centre of the learning and teaching action. He plans the lesson alone, goes to class and leads the classroom process. Most of the lesson is spent by the teacher talking, asking questions, demonstrating and even giving notes. The learner is passive. He only answers questions when asked to.

The study set out to investigate if CLT is used in the teaching of Listening and Speaking. This served to create awareness of the need to embrace an approach that meets the learner's needs. This indeed is a response to KNEC [32] exam report which noted that aspects of etiquette were lacking in majority of candidates' responses and yet it is key to interpersonal relations. Such aspects can be dealt with through the CLT approach. In the English paper one exam which tests listening and speaking, in 2006, out of a maximum score of 60, the mean score was 30.71 [32]. This indicates that there is need to do more in listening and speaking. It could therefore be concluded that in the process of learning and teaching, students should be put through an approach that encourages adaptability to various situations; the communicative approach will do just that.

Lugari District cannot as yet boast of good performance in general and more so in English. During the 2007 Lugari District Education day, the DEO noted that there had been a drop in the overall performance. English which had a mean score of 5.126 (C-) fell behind many other subjects like Kiswahili 6.003, Biology 5.393, CRE 8.867, History 6.177 and Geography 5.463. English had a mean score of 5.126 (C-) behind other subjects like Kiswahili which had a score of 6.003, Biology 5.393, CRE 8.867, History 6.177 and Geography which had a score of 5.463. In terms of student individual grades in English, no candidate in the whole district scored an 'A'. These results indicated that there was a problem in English. The general poor performance in the subject is a pointer that a problem exists. One of the problems could in Paper 1, which was the focus of the study.

The study, therefore, set out to investigate if the CLT approach, which encourages learner participation was being used in the English language classroom in Lugari District.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study stemmed from various factors. The invasive nature of the observing and recording classroom interaction also did pose a challenge. Most of the teachers were not willing to participate as they were suspicious of the researcher. To them the exercise looked like the routine school inspection which they dread. The heads of schools also posed a different form of challenge. Some of them interfered by trying to influence the researcher

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on whom to observe in class. These heads felt some of their teachers would give a negative picture of the school. To overcome this challenge, the researcher had to persuade; in fact cajole the participants. The significance of the study was explained to them and with the help of acquaintances, the participants relaxed and accepted to be observed, tape recorded and interviewed. The tension in them was so evident that they were eager to hear what the researcher felt about their lessons. Assurances were made that there was no sinister motive behind the study. They were also assured of confidentiality.

Another challenge was that some teachers shortened their lessons deliberately. A 40 minute lesson in one instance lasted only 23 minutes. The teacher appeared to be in a hurry to end the lesson. This could be interpreted to be discomfort on the part of the teacher. A stranger's presence in the classroom and knowledge that they are being observed might influence them to shift their classroom talk [33]. However, in the familiarization meetings to create rapport, no mention was made of the actual aspect of listening and speaking that the researcher sought to investigate. This was to ensure that teachers did not prepare lessons specifically for research.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Lugari District of Kakamega County in Western Kenya. The study adopted the descriptive design. This design has been the most widely used in educational research. It could be argued to be the one of the means through which competencies, opinions, attitudes, suggestions, instructions and others can be obtained.

The data required for the study was obtained from respondents in sampled schools. Forms one, two and three students from twelve (12) schools were targeted. The sample size was purposely reduced because of the observation method used for data collection. The Form Four class was excluded because at that level more concentration is on revision for the KCSE exam. A total of 14 lessons of English taught by the same number of teachers were observed. A total of twelve (12) schools were selected from forty-two (42) secondary schools in the District. These schools were selected from each division.

The schools were selected proportionally from each of the following categories of schools: Mixed, Boys and Girls. Using simple random sampling, twelve secondary schools were then selected for the study. To get the good sample of twelve (12) schools, the research used a two-staged sampling procedure, where schools were stratified into girls, boys and mixed schools. The schools were then further stratified into divisions. Fourteen (14) lessons of English in twelve (12) schools in Lugari District were observed and recorded. Fourteen teachers were interviewed using an interview schedule.

The instruments used included observation checklists, tape recording and interview guides. Observation and tape recording went on simultaneously in the listening and speaking classes. This was a qualitative research and the data was analyzed qualitatively. The data collected from observations, and interviews was first systematically recorded. It was then reduced to make it more manageable. This was done by teasing out of patterns, themes and groupings. The data was then analyzed through description. Simple frequency tables were used at the end of each description to highlight what had been described. Data on how many schools used the CLT approach and how many did not was shown in frequencies.

3. Results

During the study, it was observed that the presence of the observer in the classroom seemed to interfere with the freedom of learners. This was apparent when learners took time to get involved in classroom activities. This was evident in lesson 8, where the teacher had to ask the class not to be afraid of the teacher (See lesson 8).

Tr: He resurrected. He won. So this brief story that I have given you I would like you to give a narration. A story of yours. To narrate an experience you have had when you suffered betrayal from your friend, could be your relative but then you came out of it victorious, like Jesus did. Is there anybody ready to tell us a similar story or experience or it could be a friend that did it. A story on how you have been betrayed once by your own friends, classmate, schoolmate. Anybody ready to tell us his experience? Masinde, am sure you won't lack something to tell us. Just a brief experience. Have you ever experienced betrayal in life? Who is ready to tell us? Any experience of betrayal? Don't be nervous, madam here is just one of us. Don't be afraid. She wants to listen to what you have experienced in your life. You haven't experienced anything in life? Betrayal. Have you? Tell us we want to listen to what you have experienced. Tell us. Somebody? We are listening. Tell us. Benson.

In another lesson, a challenge arose when the teacher chose to involve the author in one of the discussion groups. It was therefore difficult to monitor what was going in the whole class. In fact in that lesson, the author only captured vividly what was going on in the groups where she was a participant observer.

Thirdly, recording the activities that happened rapidly was a challenge. This was because the schedule required that each activity be times as per participant.

3.1 Challenges faced in the Use of CLT

The study sought to find out the challenges faced in the use of the CLT approach. The question was based on the assumption that some teachers could have wished to use the CLT approach but because of certain challenges they were unable to. What therefore were the challenges faced?

All the fourteen teachers cited lack of time as the biggest challenge. They said they would wish to involve all the learners in activities such as drama and discussions but time could not allow them. They said the 40 minute lesson was too short for any meaningful activity to take place. This, they said was made worse by the wide syllabus which forced the teacher to fast-truck therefore ignoring practical lessons such as those of listening and speaking. They said that the

emphasis was on syllabus coverage. This was coupled with other demanding school programmes that involved the teacher.

Another challenge posed by ten teachers was that of students being unsure of their pronunciation abilities. This made them shy, especially when the learners were conscious of the pronunciation problems. These could be caused by mother tongue influence. The learners with such problems feel they may be laughed at.

The nature of the Paper 1 exam in the KCSE English Exam paper arose as a challenge. Four teachers said that the paper did not need oral skills to be taught practically. They said that the skills tested were theoretical and to some extent predictable. According to the teachers, one could prepare candidates to pass this paper without going through the rigor of teaching speaking or listening practically. They gave an example of oral literature which they said could be taught without the learners performing the various genres.

Inadequate or lack of resources also posed a challenge to the teacher who would wish to use the CLT approach. There were no resources like audio tapes, radios and textbooks. These problems complicated the challenge of resources. In one school for example, the school radio was kept by the matron and accessing it was a big problem.

The nature of the learners was also another challenge that teachers spoke of. There were domineering students who wanted to participate in every activity. This was at the expense of the shy, timid ones. Another group of students was the cheeky type who made fun of everything that went on in class. This type of students gave queer answers just to be heard and be seen. Some of the students were very slow in grasping. This made everybody lag behind and caused discipline problems among the fast ones. Teachers also mentioned the fact that some students had a language problem, possibly due to a poor foundation. Such students therefore had problems in expressing themselves.

In some poor schools, one teacher said they faced a challenge of inadequate exposure. They didn't receive information in time. Another teacher said that teachers did not prepare themselves for their lessons and therefore could not hold participatory lessons which are the backbone of CLT.

Table 1: Challenges faced in the Use of CLT

Challenge	Frequency
Inadequate time	14
Wide syllabus	
Nature of students i.e.	
a) Domineering students	2
b) Cheeky /students	2
c) Weak students	10
Bias by some teachers	3
Lack of Preparedness	1
Lack of exposure	1
Nature of KCSE	4
Lack of resources	4

Some teachers ignore listening and speaking. Those who ignore the two skills were those who started teaching at the time when the oral skills were not examinable. It was therefore difficult to take over a class from such a teacher. Indeed, this fact could explain why the older teachers were unwilling to be observed while teaching listening and speaking. Prior to the onset of the study, some of the teachers approached said they did not teach the two skills. Table 1 highlights the challenges cited by various teachers.

4. Discussions

Li [22] cites the difficulties faced by teachers and EFL students in Korea when attempting to introduce a communicative approach. Difficulties reported included students' lack of motivation for developing communicative competence; low English proficiency; and resistance to class participation. In addition to these were teachers' misconceptions; lack of training in CLT combined with deficiencies in sociolinguistic competence; little time for developing materials for communicative classes; and large classes. Other difficulties cited included grammar based examinations; insufficient funding; and lack of support. These research findings reflect an almost similar state of affairs. The teachers explained that they would have preferred a participatory approach but were faced by a number of challenges. They said with the large classes, the unwieldy syllabus and the pressure of formal exams, they were bound to fast-track in order to beat the odds. The result is that they hardly ever hard time to reflect on their classroom teaching especially on aspects that they did not believe directly contributed to passing examinations. Communicative competence was therefore relegated to the periphery. After all, they believe that they could make their students pass the exams without teaching oral skills practically.

Kyriacou [34], in a theoretical write-up on causes of stress for teachers, cites lack of sufficient time for syllabus coverage. This is evidence that in the context of curriculum pressure, large class sizes and the demands of assessment, parity of attention is difficult to achieve. One feature which often causes problems is that there are variations in both the quality and quantity of teacher attention which is given to different categories of pupils. In the schools studied, teachers cited differences in ability as a challenge to them and the learner in the process of teaching listening and speaking. They pointed out that there were domineering learners who were outspoken who tended to overshadow the reserved ones. The shy and timid learner did not get enough opportunity to participate. This fact was compounded by the cheeky ones who made fun of everything that went on in class. With such variety of students a teacher who is overwhelmed by work would not give adequate quality attention to the entire learners.

One of the aspects of classroom instruction that is more of less typical within a CLT approach is classroom organization [35]. They say that classroom organization that is student focused, with emphasis on meaning- based practice and the use of authentic materials is conceded to be more communicatively oriented than a classroom that is teacher-centred where language in itself is considered as focus of

instruction. In Lugari, this was not the case as the teacher faced a challenge of unavailability and inadequacy of resources. Where there were a few resources the challenge was the large sizes of classes; some going up to 65 learners per class.

The issue of the large classes also posed a challenge. The teacher did not have effective control over time-on-task or engaged time. This is the time during a lesson in which learners are actively engaged in instructional task in the schools studied. It was observed that while some learners reported or narrated, others did other things that were out of context. This could be explained by the large classes.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings on the challenges that were faced in the use of CLT, the study revealed that the major challenge lay on time, and wide syllabus. These, together with the large classes, limited the teachers' ability to involve learners in meaningful participatory activities. The pressure for formal examinations made the teacher concentrate on training and drilling the learners on how to pass the exams at the expense of communicative competence. The teachers chose to teach the learners how to pass exams and not how to use English in different situations. The result of this is that the learner will not be able to speak English both in school and after school. A teacher whose aim is to cover the syllabus will be unwilling to follow an approach that does not recognize that second language learning in a class room set- up is guided by what has already been prescribed. To such a teacher CLT is a waste of time.

Another revelation was that a certain group of teachers did not like teaching listening and speaking. While making prior arrangement for the studies, the longer serving teachers refused to be observed in class giving the excuse that they didn't teach the two skills. Indeed one Head of Department directed the author to the younger teachers. She said she was out of touch with that area. In addition, in other institutions studied, the situation was the same where the willing teachers to be observed were those who had served for less than six years. Nine out fourteen teachers actually fell into this category.

Resources such as audio and visual stimuli be used to provoke communication in lessons. Tasks should be formulated by students themselves because learner-initiated questions have the advantage that will lead the learner to develop those strategies for understanding which will ultimately take him beyond the tutelage of the teacher. These questions should be answered by fellow students.

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Author Profile

Anusu Omondi Maryslessor is an assistant lecturer in the department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media, School of Education, Moi University. Currently she is pursuing a Doctorate degree in English Language Education at Moi University.