

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

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-track 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	
c) Weak students	
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 had 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.

References

- [1] J. S. Richards and T. S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. A Description and Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.
- [2] M. Canale and M. Swain, "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing," *Applied Linguistics*, 1980.
- [3] Dornyei and Thurrell, *ELT Journal*, 48(1). Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994.
- [4] Saraceni, *English Today*, 24(2), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006.
- [5] D. Hymes, *On Communicative Competence*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1971.
- [6] R. C. Helt, "Developing Communicative Competence: A Practical Model," *The Modern Language Journal*, 66(3), pp. 255-262, 1982.
- [7] S. J. Savignon, *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice* (2nd ed.), McGraw-Hill, New York, 1997.
- [8] D. Nunan, *Language Teaching Methodology*, Prentice-Hall, London, 1991.
- [9] D. A. Wilkins, *Notional Syllabuses*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1976.
- [10] Krashen, S. *Language Education: Past, Present and Future*, *Relc Journal*, 2008.
- [11] M. Swain, "The Role of output," in *Theories of Second language*, B. McLaughlin, 1987. [Online]. Available: www.ecml.at/11/projectseminarDN.pdf
- [12] D. Hymes, *On Communicative Competence*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1972.
- [13] I. Panda and R. Stroupe-Cam, *Tesol Conference on English Language Teaching, Selected Papers, volume 2*, 2006.
- [14] D. N. Sifuna, *Development of Education in Africa: The Kenyan Experience*, Initiative Publishers, Nairobi, 1990.
- [15] Ministry of Education, *A Guide to English Teaching in Kenyan Secondary Schools*, KIE, Nairobi, 1992.
- [16] G. P. Oluoch, *Essentials of Curriculum Development*, Elimu Ltd, Nairobi, 1982.
- [17] L.P. Barasa and C. Ong'ondo, "Impact of Drama on English language Teaching," *The Educator Journal*, 1, pp. 181-189, Moi University Press, Eldoret, 2003.
- [18] B. Bigambo, *The Role of Speaking and Writing in Communicative Competence: The Case of Moi University Students of Chemical and Processing Engineering*, Unpublished D.Phil Thesis, Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya, 2000.
- [19] D. Li, "Teachers' Perceived Difficulties in Introducing the Communicative Approach in South Korea," in *Innovations in English Language Teaching: A Reader*, Hall, D. R. and Hewings, A. (Eds.), Routledge, Oxon, 2001.
- [20] Kumaravadivelu, *TESOL Methods: Challenging Trends*, Article, 1993
- [21] D. Nunan, *The Learner Centred Curriculum*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1988.
- [22] S. Bax, "The End of CLT: A Context Approach to Language Teaching," *ELT Journal*, 57(20), pp. 278-287. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003.
- [23] R. Mitchell, *Communicative Language Teaching in Practice*, Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, London, 1988.
- [24] Rono et al., "Memory and Forgetting," in *Clinical Psychiatry and Mental Health*, Ndeti, D.M. (Ed.), AMREF, Nairobi, 2006.
- [25] M. C. Nyaga, *Motivating Factors for Kiambu Kiswahili-English Code-Choice & Code-Switching: A Case Study* [Online]. Available: <http://www.anburn.edu.cnunnath/engl6240/clt.html>

- of Kavutiri Sec. School – Embu, Unpublished M. Phil Thesis, Moi University, 1994.
- [26] C. G. Theuri, A Study of Communication and English Language Use in Standard Four Rural Classrooms in Kangema North Division, Muranga District, Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1985.
- [27] L. Juma, The Structure of Classroom Discourse in Kenya Secondary Schools, Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Kenyatta University, 1991.
- [28] J. O. Makhulo, A Study of Verbal Interaction in Upper Primary in some Selected Schools in Hamisi Division of Kakamega, Unpublished M.Ed Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1984.
- [29] Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), KCSE Newsletter, KNEC, Nairobi, 2006.
- [30] I. I. Odeo, Oral Questioning in the Pedagogy of Kiswahili Grammar in Secondary Schools in Bungoma District, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Moi University, 2003.
- [31] C. Kyriacou, "Teacher Stress: Directions for Future Research," Educational Review, 53(1), 2001.
- [32] C. J. Richards and D. Nunan, Second Language Teacher Education, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.

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.