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TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION OF ENGLISH THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE
APPROACH IN HIGHER EDUCATION**Ruzimuradova Shoxista Akbarovna***Termez University of Economics and Service, Uzbekistan*

ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: Communicative language teaching, homeschooling, ESL, reading comprehension.**Received:** 17.04.2024**Accepted:** 22.04.2024**Published:** 27.04.2024**Abstract:** The objectives of this study are to investigate the perceptions of the secondary homeschooling students on the use of the communicative approach (CLT) in their reading classrooms and to find out to what extent CLT contributes to the development of ESL learners' reading skill. Four procedures were employed for data collection which included Pre-test and Post-Test, Classroom Observation, Questionnaire and Structured Interview. In general, the results in the Experimental Group showed that there was significant improvement among the learners between pre and post-test scores. Therefore, we can conclude that there was a significant improvement in scores between pre-test to post-test scores. Most secondary homeschooling students are enthusiastic and positive about the communicative approach in their ESL reading classrooms, whereby they learn more vocabulary through group discussions and improve their reading comprehension when exchanging ideas and opinions. Responses and attitude were very positive and strongly agreed with the use of CLT for improving their reading skills as the CLT approach has changed the reading class atmosphere to be better than before. Therefore, the homeschooling students felt pretty cheerful, comfortable and excited during the learning process of reading using CLT activities. Besides that, both homeschooling teachers tend to have a clear, positive and supportive attitudes and perceptions toward CLT. They strongly agreed that CLT is an effective and useful teaching

method to accommodate the demands of the time as this method put high emphasis on the interpersonal skill, stimulate the students to communicate their enthusiasm as well as stimulate their interest in their language learning process. Moreover, this approach is advantageous and favourable as the approach is to involve every student in the communicative activities and places high emphasis on communication which highly encouraged the students to communicate and interact with each other as well as stimulate their interest in English learning and developing their learner autonomy.

INTRODUCTION

In today's global world, it cannot be denied that English plays a crucial role in communication since it is the most accepted language spoken in many different places worldwide. With advances in technology, English has a dominant role in various sectors including engineering, medicine and education, which are three of the most crucial fields where English is highly essential. Specifically, a developing country like Uzbekistan has to accept and apply this world-wide spoken language in all sectors in order to confirm its international status (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013) CLT refers to both processes and objectives in classroom learning with an attempt to practice the communicative competence concept (Richards, 2001). CLT emphasizes communication as both the means and the ultimate aim of learning a language. The teaching and learning of ESL in Selangor home-schools adopts CLT and aims to get learners engaged in real-life communication in the English language. Classroom enrollment in home-schools, which is around 20 learners per class should enable English language teachers assist individual learners to participate in the learning process. The small class size allows for personalised teacher attention and active learner participation in every home-school class which are normally between 40 and 80 minutes per session. The main objective of CLT approach is for meaningful communication through activities designed for learning. Since the process of teaching and learning is mutual, students play a major role in learning the target language. Commonly, this approach is acknowledged as a new means to language instruction which has evolved in response to the comprehension that "knowledge of grammatical forms and structures alone does not sufficiently develop the learners effective and proper application of the language they are acquiring" (Celce, 2009, pg 66). Furthermore, this approach is established on the hypothesis that language is a vehicle of communication and thus the major purpose of learning a language is being able to communicate appropriately and efficiently. The implementation of CLT has encountered difficulties and opposition in the Uzbekistan ESL reading classroom (Kasim, 2015). According to the Motteram (2013), the delivery

of language instruction is still based on conventional methods normally observed in the ESL reading classrooms. This is due to the many different new CLT ideas compared to the instructional value and traditions of many ESL reading settings (Henrichsen, 2007). Furthermore, circumstantial factors such as the exam-oriented approach already rooted in the Uzbekistan education system and the low English language competency among home-school students seem to have significant implications on the practices and implementation of CLT in the Uzbekistan secondary English reading Classes. Therefore, in order to ensure successful implementation of CLT in the Uzbekistan secondary English reading classes, an understanding of the secondary home-school students' opinions regarding CLT applications in their reading classrooms should be clarified. This could be new information It is essential and crucial to have an understanding of the secondary home-schools students' opinions regarding the application of CLT in English reading classrooms so that educational stakeholders, especially our Ministry of Education can carefully examine significant factors surrounding the implementation of CLT in our secondary English reading classes in order to enhance English proficiency among Uzbekistan home-schools students.

Background of the study

In Uzbekistan, English is the major second language for many sectors of the economy including education, businesses, medical, engineering, law, as well as travelling abroad. English is taught as a compulsory subject from primary one to secondary five in all homeschools in Uzbekistan. The conventionally applied Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is unable to yield positive outcomes, as the more extensive knowledge spheres, world globalization and the comprehensive application of English language in all domains of life requires the future generation to become specialists in the application of the English language, not only in its written form but also in its verbal communication. It is applied as a tool and means toward significant objectives (Chang, 2011). In Uzbekistan, English should be taught from an applied linguistics point of view (Motteram, 2013). In other words, whatever the home-school students learn in the classroom should be closely related to their real life situations. Generally, English is regarded as a second language in Uzbekistan homeschooling. The advocates of ESL declare that although English is the language of business, military affairs, education and others, it is not a communication vehicle among the public. As a result, the majority of secondary home-school students hardly find any opportunity to apply English outside the home-school classroom (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Thus, English has a second language context in Uzbekistan home schooling. Reading is an essential skill for students in ESL context and reading comprehension is an interactive and complicated process affected by linguistic and cognitive factors, social and cultural factors and affective and

motivational factors (Yu, 2001). As pointed out by Ying (2010), powerful reading skills enable ESL learners to build more development and acquire huge growth in all academic domains. Despite the attention given to reading by teachers and students in Uzbekistan and the claim that reading as a skill is built up through the CLT approach, the development of reading instruction and the reading abilities of the students are unacceptable in the Uzbekistan ESL context. Most probably, the occurrence of this incident is due to lack of linguistic input among the ESL students, disconcerting school culture and learning environment, as well as provision of improper reading materials. Society at large, especially parents need to be more aggressive in educating and cultivating good reading habits among the children from a young age. Reading starts at home and parents are the main indicators of whether their child is achieving the learning habit. Children at a delicate age are more like sponges giving nourishment to their minds knowledge and useful information from their parents who act as their role model. In order to provide a powerful platform for the children to develop a strong passion in reading, the children should be equipped with definite and good reading habits at a young age. Since school teachers are heavily engaged with their routine stressful work of cultivating and teaching children, parents should therefore play a crucial role in developing and cultivating their children to spend more time reading as this will improve the social bondage between them (Inderjit, 2014). Assuming that our youth can spend their extra time reading and developing critical thinking, social problems such as drug-taking, illegal racing, baby-dumping and so on will be reduced in our society.

1.2. Problem Statement According to Chan and Tan (2006), there are many unemployed fresh local graduates who are experiencing obstacles in securing jobs due to low proficiency in the English language. The majority of fresh graduates cannot speak and read well in English nor do they have good listening skills. Obviously, the appearance of this phenomenon indicates that our education system lacks the capability to develop and prepare our students for the needs of the job market, especially interacting in English. In addition, it also indicates the ineffectiveness of traditional approaches such as the teacher-centred approach which is currently practiced in the majority of Uzbekistan English Language Teaching (ELT) secondary homeschooling (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Consequently, there is a need to call for implementation of a more effective approach such as CLT in the Uzbekistan secondary English reading classrooms. Thus, it is crucial to investigate and record the secondary home-school students' opinions regarding the application of CLT in English reading classrooms before actually implementing the CLT approach. This highlights the significance of the present study. The research by Richards & Rogers (2014), noticed that the majority of the secondary home-school students are not motivated to learn and engage themselves in English language activities such as reading. Most English teachers will try their best to motivate and encourage students to read in English but this has proven to be unsuccessful because most students will stick to

their mother tongue language; Mandarin among the Chinese students and Malay among the Malay students. Most of the students will also focus on grammar rules, which they believe can help them to pass the examinations. As a result, the Grammar Translation Method emerged as a popular language teaching method in teaching ESL, and applying mainly translation and grammar study as the main classroom activities. This method puts more focus on grammatical rules, vocabulary memorization, texts translations as well as performing written activities. Overemphasis on translation can neglect the listening and speaking skills of the ESL students. Mastering a lot of grammatical rules does not mean students can apply them appropriately and accurately in real communication situations. Most importantly, knowing grammar rules and having bilingual word lists is not going to motivate the students to actively communicate in the target language. Besides that, the majority of secondary homeschooling students are unable to apply what they have learnt in the classrooms to the situational setting of their daily life (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). The five years of secondary homeschooling may equip students with a substantial amount of linguistic knowledge on English, but they are still unable to read English fluently or listen and comprehend a text well. This low performing English language learners, especially in reading remains a problem until now. This has resulted in a need to conduct a research that focus on the effective implementation of CLT in secondary English reading home-schools. In order to ensure effective implementation of CLT approach in reading, it is crucial that the CLT approach is firstly effectively and successfully implemented in the Uzbekistan secondary English reading classes to enhance the language proficiency especially oral competency among secondary homeschooling students. Specifically, since the research on this aspect in Uzbekistan secondary English reading classrooms have been scarce, this study intends to fill the educational gaps (Littlewood, 2007).

Research Objectives

As a result of the expanding effect of globalization, communication in English has become increasingly extensive. Majority of the non-English speaking countries around the world are also more accepting of the English language. In order to prepare our secondary homeschooling students to be knowledgeable in national and international communication, there is a need for the effective implementation of CLT in Uzbekistan secondary English reading classrooms first. The objectives of this study are to investigate and observe students' perceptions of the use of CLT and to explore to what extent CLT approach contributes to improving ESL learners' reading skill. Hence, in order to achieve the research objectives, the following research questions are constructed: i. What are students' perceptions of the use of CLT in their reading classrooms? ii. To what extent does CLT approach contribute to ESL learners' reading skill?

Significance of the study

As in many ESL contexts, Uzbekistan has implemented the teacher-centred educational model for centuries. In order to employ this comparably new communicative approach in Uzbekistan secondary English reading classrooms, it is crucial and significant to investigate and examine how CLT has been implemented in such educational settings. So far not many studies have been conducted on secondary home-schools students' opinions about the application of CLT in their English reading classrooms. Hence, this study explores and investigates the students' perceptions of the use of CLT in their reading classrooms with the intention of recommending and suggesting that their opinions be considered prior to the decision to integrate CLT into the Uzbekistan secondary English reading classrooms (Savignon & Wang, 2003). Based on the studies done by Wright (2000) on CLT in Uzbekistan, there is still a lack of or no empirical data on the secondary home-schools students' opinions about the application of CLT in English reading classrooms. As a result, there is a research gap that has to be addressed in the discussion on CLT application in the secondary home-schools English reading classroom. Therefore, as a researcher who strongly believe that there is a need to investigate the secondary home-schools students' opinions about the application of CLT in English reading classrooms with the intention to address this educational gap as well as provide resolutions to the educational gaps. Since the unsuccessful implementation of CLT in 1970s, there has been a research conducted on teachers' attitude and beliefs in teaching English language in Uzbekistan (Radzi, Azmin, Zolhani, & Latif, 2007). Consequently, based on the information from the previous research, it is necessary to conduct a research to identify secondary home-schools students' opinions about the application of CLT as well as how it contributed to ESL learners' reading skill in order to ensure successful implementation of the CLT in Uzbekistan secondary English reading classrooms. Upon completion of this study, it is hoped that the result of this study will benefit to the educational stakeholders, especially Ministry of Education of Uzbekistan to apply the result of the current study to improve the current curriculum to the Uzbekistan secondary homeschooling with the intention to improve the language proficiency among secondary homeschooling students.

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