

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD
IMPACT ON 9-YEAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aimed to summarize the importance of using Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT) in teaching English as a foreign Language in 9-year elementary school students in Albanian context. It also aimed to answer the research question and to describe the effect that the application of this method had in the classroom in comparison with other traditional methods. The data were collected with a qualitative method and the instrument used was Observation. The participants were 367 students divided in: 189 students in the Experimental Group and 178 students in the Control Group (age 11 to 15 years old).

The results showed that learning a foreign language through communication is a more effective and satisfying way of learning. After analyzing the observations, we concluded that the communicative method affects teaching, learning, motivation, socialization and interaction of the students. In traditional methods the focus is on vocabulary learning, grammar rules and pronunciation through imitation, memorization, repetition with very little interaction where each situation is directed by the teacher and students' feelings are not taken into consideration and there is a lack of socialization and interaction.

Keywords:

Foreign Language Teaching;
Learning;
Communication;
Effect;
Comparison;

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1. Introduction

The process of communication is important because helps people to express the meaning of their thoughts. If the teacher creates in the classroom real life situations this would increase students' motivation to learn and would enhance their desire to communicate in topics of interest. The communicative activities enhance and develop not only communication skills but also the other language skills of listening, reading, writing, vocabulary learning and inductive learning of grammar rules.

1.1. Aim of the study

This study aims to summarize the importance of using Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT) in teaching English as a foreign language in 9-year elementary schools in Albanian context. It also aims to answer the research question and to describe the effect and the results that the application of this method has in the classroom in comparison with other traditional methods used. The CLT method has its impact and is more effective in enhancing the students' motivation, socialization, interaction and language learning than other traditional methods.

1.2. Research question

How the CLT interactive and student-centered foreign language teaching method does affect learning in comparison with traditional methods?

1.3. Literature review

-Communicative Language Teaching Method

CLT is a foreign language teaching method, its aim is to make students to communicate in a foreign language using activities such as oral communication activities, communicating with games, problem solving, paintings discussion, story construction, stimulation, role plays, fill in the space exercises, written communication activities, exchanges of letters and messages, dialogue complementation, images, questions and many others. Games are a good incentive for motivation and communication which helps in learning a foreign language. The teacher in the classroom aids communication creates situations during activities act as advisory for the students. Because the role of teachers is less dominant than in the other methods the students are at the center.

Richards (2006) gives some really useful principles about communication which enhance and facilitate language learning: -interaction and meaningful communication, -tasks and exercises, -communication helps students to use and develop different language skills, -language learning is easier if activities involve inductive rules. CLT can provide to the learner a better opportunity to communicate than a method based on grammatical rules, repetition and memorization, students have the opportunity to create real communication and focus on their own learning, they can also develop their fluency as well as accuracy and expand and develop all the other language skills.

-Teaching and Learning

Thornbury (1999) lists some advantages of the inductive way of learning a language and grammar: -When students self-discover grammar rules it is easier for them to acquire those rules, -in this way students can be more active during learning and not passive and this can bring them more motivation and attention, -and because collaboration is more effective in problem solving this give students the opportunity for more practice. While the deductive way of teaching grammatical rules may be frustrating for students and explanation is based on memorization.

Nunan's (1991) states that CLT method effectively influences teaching and learning, because it gives the opportunity to communicate through interaction, makes use of authentic materials in learning context, gives to the students opportunities to manage their own learning, using their own experiences and opinions as a contribution in the classroom in order to relate classroom language learning with language used on activities outside the classroom, it seems that this method is very interested in the needs and desires of the learners and on the real use of language not only outside but also inside the classroom and since students develop their communicative competence in an authentic context CLT may be considered as a very useful form of teaching which enhances students learning.

-Motivation

According to Harmer (2007) nothing motivates the student more than success and nothing demotivates the student more than continuous failure. It is part of the teacher's art trying to provide that the students are going to be successful because the more their success lasts the more their motivation to study will last. It is part of the teacher's job to establish the right level of

challenge for the students, which is neither too simple nor too difficult and include students in learning tasks where they can succeed. The teacher should also guide students toward success by showing them how to do things properly. The activities implemented on the classroom are of a crucial importance for enhancing students' motivation. If students like the activities implemented on the classroom and if they receive good feedback or results which means that they learn and acquire better language skills will enhance their involvement during the lesson and their interactivity on the learning process.

CLT implementation creates a motivating classroom environment giving to the students the opportunity to learn through communication in a foreign language and it is more useful and effective than other traditional methods.

-Activities, interaction and socialization

Harmer (2001) mentions different types of activities which enhance communication and are used on CLT method:

- Acting scenes or parts of works or dialogues found or built by the students themselves. To realize this activity should be created a supportive atmosphere in the classroom giving to the students time to rehearse or to repeat.

-Games where students are actively involved in the interaction.

-Discussions in pairs or groups.

-Presentations where students present a topic for which they are prepared.

-Role play affects the fluency and prepares students for specific situations; students do not feel themselves as students but as real participants in a given situation, they view the classroom as the environment where the conversations are being realized such as an airport, a meeting place, a train station etc.

Communicative teaching activities make the classroom active and the lesson interactive, also they are motivating and enjoyable and arise students desire to learn while traditional exercises

may be frustrating and make students passive. In teaching it is very important to consider students perception about activities used and communicative activities implementation, the way they want and prefer learning a foreign language and their attitude towards the language. Students' opinions and views of learning a foreign language are very important in order to meet their needs and to find the best methods to teach them in the way they want to and in the way they would succeed.

2. Research Method

-Data Collection and Procedure

The data are collected with a qualitative method. The instrument used to collect the qualitative data is Observation and the data are analyzed in a descriptive analytic way. The observation was conducted by the researcher and the notes collected during the participations in the classrooms are analysed based on the relevant literature, analysing theoretical issues and the practical results. The collected data are analysed according to the impact that the usage of CLT method has in Learning, Motivation, Socialization and Interaction of the students in comparison with tradicional methods. The participant students were devided in two groups in the experimental group and in the control group. In the experimental group the method used in teaching English as a foreign language was Communicative Language Teaching Method, CLT while in the control group were used the traditional methods Grammar Translation Method, GTM and Audio-Lingual method, ALM.

-Participants

The total number of 9-year elementary schools students (age 11 to 15 years old) that participated in this study is 367 divided in: 189 students in the Experimental Group and 178 students in the Control Group.

The division was done randomly by the English Language teachers in the participatory schools and classes.

-Observations

The observations give the opportunity to study events and behaviors in their real, natural context and are characterized by validity. The type of observation used was *simple observation*, the observer was not part of the process but was an outside person. The observations in this study were used to understand the impact of CLT method in language learning, motivation, socialization and interaction of the students during the lesson in comparison with traditional methods.

Observation hours in total-27

Observation hours in the experimental group-18

Observation hours in the control group-9

3. Results and Analysis

The techniques used in the classroom during the implementation of the relevant methods.

CLT Techniques Used on the Experimental Group participants

-Authentic Materials

Real communication and real context use of language in the classroom

-Scrambled Sentences

Logic, cohesion, coherence learnt

-Language Games

Free communication, free expression of ideas and opinions, motivation enhanced

-Strip Story

Socialization

-Role Play

Interaction

ALM Techniques Used on the Control Group participants

-Dialog Memorization

Specific context used

-Backward Build-up Drill

Model imitation

-Repetition Drill

Repetition

-Chain Drill

-Single and multiple slot Substation

-Transformation Drill

-Question-answer Drill

Given vocabulary, given grammar rules

GTM Techniques Used on the Control Group participants

-Translation of a Literary Passage

Specific context used, focused on translation

-Reading Comprehension Questions

Focused on reading and writing not on communication

-Antonyms/Synonyms/Cognates

Given vocabulary

-Deductive Application of Rules

Grammar rules are learnt deductively

-Fill in the Blank

Exercises to practice grammar rules

-Composition

Focuses on writing

Below, there are analyzed the results of the notes taken on Observations during the implementation in practice of these methods in the two separated groups. The analysis is done by describing what happened on the classroom with students' behavior during the lesson. And it is based even on theoretical issues and supported by different methodologists.

3.1. Learning

While using the **communicative method** everything in the classroom was done with the goal of communicating and the students were involved in communication activities. If students were limited to specific and predetermined situations or questions, would be obliged to respond only to them mechanically and memorized without having a choice and without being free to

communicate what they wanted. But the purpose in this method is to make real communication. Also the use of authentic materials gave them the opportunity to communicate in the language as it is used in actuality. Richards (2006) says that CLT communication helps students use and develop different language skills and that language learning becomes easier if activities involving inductive rules and language analysis or reflection are used. Even according to Savignon (2001), students focus more on grammar when learning is related to their experience and communication needs.

The techniques **Authentic Materials** and **Scrambled Sentences** enabled the real-world communication and use of the language in the real context of the classroom as well as learning the use of sentences in a logical sense, learning cohesion and coherence. Authentic materials are important because they can motivate the students, grammar is not taught in isolation but through communication interaction and negotiation of meaning and through communication activities. Students have more autonomy in the selection more opportunities for self-esteem and interaction with others by not seeing learning as individuals but as a social process, they have the opportunity to learn in various ways to develop creative thinking skills.

The technique **Language Games** encouraged free communication, freedom of expression and thought. Through the cards and learning materials the students formed and developed the rules of grammar that they induced inductively from the context, in terms of verb tenses, questions, adjectives, and other grammatical aspects. Thornbury (1999) lists some of the advantages of the inductive way of learning grammar and language:

-When students discover the rules of grammar themselves, it is easier for them to master those rules by generating them from the existing mental structure and other rules that have been introduced in some way.

-Then learners can be more active during learning and not passive and this can bring them more motivation and attention.

-Because cooperation is more effective in solving the problem, it gives students the opportunity for more practice. While deductive learning of grammatical rules can be tedious for students and the explanation is based on memorization.

In **traditional methods** vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation were taught through imitation, memorization and repetition. There was very little student-student interaction, the lesson was done and directed by the teacher.

Use of techniques **Dialogue Memorization, Backward Build-up Drill, Repetition Drill and Translation of a Literary Passage** allowed only the use of a specific context during the lesson and the students were somehow obliged to imitate the teacher's model as well as the focus was placed on translation, without paying attention to communication. While other **Chain Drill, Transformation Drill, Single and multiple slot Substitution, Question-answer Drill** techniques were used to teach students the new words of vocabulary, correct pronunciation of words, sentence translation, and grammar rules. All these were introduced and practiced only in a dialogue that the teacher gave the students to memorize. Thus, the students were limited to acting only in the framework of the given text. Regarding the rules of grammar, they were introduced by the teacher in a deductive manner and then practiced through grammar exercises techniques.

In the **communicative method** the teacher was facilitator in the classroom, during the activities and monitored the performance of the students. Since the role of the teacher is less dominant than in other methods the students were placed in the center and became responsive by taking on the management of their own language learning.

The use of techniques **Language Games, Role Play, and Strip Story** inspired the communication, motivation and interaction of students as we mentioned above also brought about improvements in their relationships because it encouraged them for more collaboration. According to Brown (2001), the role of the teacher should be that of the facilitator and guide, not the role of the person who knows everything.

While in **traditional methods** the teacher was a leader in controlling the language and behavior of students, gave to the students an imitation pattern. The students were simulators, language memorizers and followed the teacher's rules.

According to Larsen-Freeman (2000) the ALM method has been criticized for the very limited number of student roles. Students are seen as stimulo-response mechanisms whose teaching is based on repetitive practice. Young methodologists are more concerned about student roles and variance among them. CLT sees students as negotiators on the learning process. The implication of the student is that he should contribute as much as he earns, and thus learn independently.

3.2. Motivation

Well-planned teaching and motivation can reduce classroom management problems, maintaining and creating a climate that leads to effective learning. Motivation problems are related to student involvement in the learning process. Motivation is everything that drives people to do what they want. Motivation is one of the main reasons for using the **communicative method**. The students felt more motivated to learn English because they felt they were doing something useful with the language, they also expressed their personality because they were given the opportunity to give their ideas and opinions. Using **Language Games, Role Play, and Strip Story** brought more motivation for the students to engage in learning. They were more enthusiastic to participate in the lesson in groupwork etc.

Thompson (1996) argues that group work increases motivation levels and students produce more language and develop fluency without the pressure or control of the teacher; They can develop their ideas, social skills, communicative competence, and critical thinking. According to Richards (2006), the application of the CLT method creates a motivational environment in the classroom that gives students the ability to learn through communication in a foreign language and is more useful and effective than other traditional methods.

In **traditional methods**, students' feelings were not taken into consideration. The use of repetitive or imitative techniques created to the students nervousness and lack of patience by

creating monotony in the classroom. The students did not have the opportunity to express their motivation or to interact with each other.

3.3. Socialization and interaction

The activities of the **communicative method** being motivating and enjoyable make the class active and the lesson interactive, and tend to increase the students' desire to learn while traditional exercises can be tedious and make the students passive. In teaching it is very important to take into account students' perceptions of the activities used in the classroom as well as the activities that make use of communication, the way they want and prefer to learn a foreign language and their attitude towards the language. The more the student gets involved in the lesson, the greater the outcome will be on learning. Learning in co-operation is important as it helps students to form the basic collaborative values they need and to think independently, inside and outside the classroom.

In the **communicative method** the students interacted with each other because of the interactive techniques used and the groups work gave to them the possibility of socialization and interaction. According to Richards (2006), CLT interaction and meaningful communication are very important in language learning because they promote learning and language acquisition and the tasks and exercises give to the students the opportunity to derive meaning, use language and expand language resources by including meaningful interaction. Using the techniques **Language Games, Role Play, and Strip Story** that are developed through group work motivate students to get involved in the classroom and consequently increases the desire to interact more as well as socialization and cooperative spirit. Teamwork also brought their commitment to work and to respond. Through these techniques, they had the ability to interact more in the classroom by communicating with one another, by passing the embarrassment and fear of speaking freely in English.

In **traditional methods** there was a lack of socialization and interaction in the activities that were used. The use of **Chain Drill, Transformation Drill, Single and multiple slot Substation, Question-answer Drill and Grammar Exercises** were directed by the teacher so students did not have the opportunity to interact with one another or to be very active and

interact during class because the activity was developed with the entire class not with separate groups or pairs.

4. Conclusion

After analyzing the observations, we can conclude that the communicative method affects teaching, learning, and student-student interaction because the goal in this method is to make real communication using authentic materials that give students the ability to communicate in the language as it is used in the actuality. The role of teachers in the method of communication is very important. In traditional methods the focus is placed on vocabulary learning, grammar rules and pronunciation through imitation, memorization, repetition with very little interaction where each situation is directed by the teacher. The teacher is a leader in directing and controlling the language and behavior of students.

Using a student-centered method affects motivation and socialization of students, while in traditional methods students' feelings are not taken into consideration and there is a lack of socialization and interaction. In the communicative method the students feel more motivated to learn English because they feel they are doing something useful with the language, they also express their personality because they are given the opportunity to give their ideas and opinions. In the communicative method the students interact very much with each other because of the interactive techniques used and the groups work or games, which provide the opportunity of both socialization and interaction. Communication activities promote and develop not only communication skills, but also listening, reading, writing, learning new words, and teaching grammar inductively.

The findings and results of this study are limited in the context and environment of the participants and we cannot make generalizations across the country but this study remains as a scientific evidence regarding the debates over the use of contemporary methods in Albanian context and other expanded researches with other or more participants can give even more results.

-Recommendations

-Teachers can improve their methodology of foreign language teaching by being more creative and trying to use activities that make the students more active in the classroom and enhance their motivation to learn and to succeed.

-Further observations with foreign language learners can provide us with more results and different insights about the use of communication in teaching.

-Other studies can be done to analyze the effects of communication on learning using different methods of data collection and on different perspectives or participants or by analysing other influencing factors.

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