

Integrating Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) into reading instruction: a path to interactive and meaningful reading

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Abstract

Nowadays, teaching a foreign language to students has come a long way since its early days necessitating a lot of skills together with innovative approaches. So, modern teachers are investigating through different methodologies to facilitate learning process emphasizing organic exposure to authentic materials over rote memorization. As a result, educators are giving precedence to CLT (Communicative language teaching) to advance its effectiveness mainly due to a wide range of benefits it offers to learners. Especially, among four fundamental language skills reading is often argued as rather underrepresented in terms of CLT integration rather than the introduction of CLT into teaching receptive skills like listening and speaking. So, it is gaining worldwide attention though it is a comparatively new phenomenon. This article highlights the implementation of CLT in fostering reading proficiency effectively and making this process more engaging and less stressful in ESL classroom through different strategies and techniques.

Keywords: CLT, reading comprehension, receptive skill, task-based learning, pre-reading, while-listening, post-reading, authentic materials, schema theory, skimming, scanning, intensive reading, extensive reading

Introduction

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is widely known for its effectiveness in improving the listening and speaking skills of students among language educators. Yet, less attention is focused on enhancing reading skills through meaningful CLT principles in teaching reading as it is traditionally believed to be solitary and passive activity. For many centuries, comprehension questions and vocabulary lists are heavily depended by teachers thereby leaving no room for a chance to approach texts in a communicative manner.

This article is devoted to reorientating CLT focus to improve reading comprehension of students so as to make this process engaging and fulfilling rather than the challenge to deal with unfamiliar words and complex structures. It demonstrates how communicative activities can be effectively used to boost overall reading comprehension, critical thinking and instill productive reading habits into students. The principal research question guiding this article is that: „How can CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) be effectively integrated into reading lessons to enhance learner engagement comprehension?

Methods

This study is based on a task design approach supported by existing literature and theoretical frameworks of CLT. Two lessons were specially organized with CLT integration and piloted with intermediate level (B1) English learners at one of the language centers in Bukhara. Each class was devoted to different types of texts together with questions including pre-, while-, and post-reading tasks.

For example, in session 1 students were distributed an article about pollution in modern era and relying on schema theory they were asked to speak what they have known so far about

this topic . Before going to the main text, their oral opinions were collected and summarized after which they did specific information gap activities coming from their pre knowledge about different types of pollution. After that they were given posters relating to the problems with pollution and required to draw solutions to existing issues in groups. Finishing this process, representatives from each group explained their solutions highlighting their importance. And the tutor scaffolded guiding through the key words and assigned the organized groups to read different parts of the article in detail prior to doing gap filling and multiple choice activities.

In session 2, another different methodology was applied which not only promotes to get the main point of the article but also works a lot to deal with complex passages and come up with correct answers to especially multiple choice questions. Once, they were handed authentic materials -texts about sleep disorders among people which were designed to provide organic exposure to natural language patterns . Next, they were assigned to read this article carefully 3 times and write down a reflection at the end about what they have learned from this article in short. As reading is considered to be a receptive skill the greater emphasis was oriented towards interpreting general meaning rather than producing language. After this they did 5 multiple choice questions in a row according to the very article to which they reflected.

One additional method was semi-structured interviews based on qualitative research. For this, on average 3 or 4 students are required in order to know in-depth opinions of students about today`s class. They are interviewed with different questions focusing on the student acceptance level of CLT. Here we can include some questions like:

„How different was our today`s class from previous sessions?“

„What did you find difficult about this method?“

„Did group discussions helped you to do better at your classroom reading session?“

„Would you like to have more classes like this“

Results

The results obtained from this research shows increased student performance, higher motivation and more active participation as a result of classroom implementation of CLT. Students started to understand the general meaning of the context better compared to the time when they are taught with traditional methods. It is also obvious that the psychology that reading is a solitary and boring process made them bear mundane passages without any comprehension. The main goal of the students was only to take the correct answer but not to get the main point. So, it was especially tough when they have to solve the tests involving overall meaning rather than details. Noteworthy to mention is that in pre-reading session, the organized discussion with their own opinions helped a lot students to enhance their critical thinking and see bigger picture of the topic. Another important point was a time when they made posters with the solutions to current pollution problems. Teamwork has taught so much to the extent that they sharpened their mind and illustrated their solutions in colours. It provided deeper level of comprehension prior to moving to the main text.

Additionally, second strategy taught that reading tasks are much more interesting when it is connected to real life and their own opinions. Many students highlighted that they remembered the meaning better when they themselves reflected to it. I analyzed their results thoroughly and made sure that CLT works intensively to progress students` results. Because these types of texts were the most challenging ones and they always ended up getting low results. For example, without CLT integration they did 2 out of 5 questions on average. However, the results were at least 4 after the implementation of communicative style to reading section.

Discussion

The findings of this mini research aligns with the support from previous literature on the benefits of interactive and engaging tasks in language teaching. Even though direct results are more associated with speaking, if approaches are applied in a right way it works well with passive skills also. Through prediction, collaboration, discussion and reflection learners become more active which leads to deeper understanding and improved retention.

The focus of our research goes beyond immediate gains and moves towards some interesting results at the end. For example, with which reading section CLT applies best was found as a result. Pre-reading stage is known for active application of CLT as it requires from students to express their pre knowledge, take part in discussion and represent their work in front of the classroom. Especially the questions urging the learners to discuss with their partners pushes them to speak in target language. But, while-reading stage can not be actively organized with these methods because it demands that student sit in one place and try to deal with the passage and questions coming from this text. They mostly focus on reading this context, reflecting on their minds and coming up with right answers at the end. So, passive implementation is suitable for while-reading procedure. Lastly, post-reading is known for active coverage of CLT because it works with students overall understanding and mostly about their feelings about the provided text. After they have done the translation, they are asked about what they found challenging through reading or how they reflected. In this situation students have to communicate with their peers or teacher so as to convey what is in their mind.

Another valuable finding was about appropriate age coverage for CLT tasks as teachers have to work with different students within classroom. After the research it was documented that CLT is much less effective with beginners and elementary level students. Because they do not have enough language foundation to convey their ideas in English .Their grammar range and vocabulary are limited and they always suffer from anxiety and fear of mistakes. Moreover they lack in input to organize their conversations accordingly. Last but not least, without any linguistic support group discussions or creative may seem daunting. However, it is the best option for intermediate and upper-intermediate students as they have basic knowledge of target language. Additionally, they are psychologically developed by having greater confidence and have the ability to handle unscripted communication. They benefit a lot by expressing their identity by attending group discussions which develop critical thinking.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of CLT into reading classes will be extremely useful on condition that appropriate age and condition are taken into account. Though immediate gains are not that widespread due to the lack of research and unsuitable nature of communication in terms of reading, we can develop it through experimenting within different classroom conditions and various techniques. It should be admitted that it offers an array of benefits ranging from improved engagement to fostered comprehension. By transforming reading from passive and solitary activity to an engaging and interactive procedure, overall student performance can be boosted a lot. By making reading a communicative activity, teachers can help students view texts not only as sources of information but also as springboards for meaningful interaction. When students start to see this process as a chance to develop their worldview and interchange ideas rather than mundane translation process, their motivation increases and overall comprehension rate rises. Further research is needed to continue exploring the application of CLT in different reading contexts, including online learning environment and academic reading.

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