International Journal of Research in English Education (IJREE)

Original Article **Published online: 20 June 2023.**

Proceedings of the First National Virtual Conference on English Language Teaching in the Iranian Mainstream Education System

The Effect of Adapting Textbook Activities to Make Them More Communicative on Classroom Communication Orientation: An Action Research Study

Azin Nasseh [1], Mohammad Reza Anani Sarab [2], Esmaeel Nourmohammadi[3], & Mohammad Amin Nasseh[4]

* Correspondence:
9914641001@hsu.ac.ir
1. Department of English, Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran
2. Department of English, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran
3. Department of English, University of Sistan and Baluchestan, Zahedan, Iran
4. Department of English, Birjand University, Birjand, Iran

Proceedings of the First National Virtual Conference on English Language Teaching in the Iranian Mainstream Education System

Abstract

Classroom communication depends on many factors, including teacher, learner, syllabus, instructional materials, textbook activities and learning environment. Textbook activities can function as communication venues by either providing the learners with production and reception opportunities to engage in to be able to use the target language in a purposeful way or preparing scripts for learners' communicative language practice. Establishing good communication between and among learners and teachers can mobilize the classroom atmosphere and stimulate learners' attendance, engagement and achievement in a positive way. To get to know where the students need to improve, learners should be observed by the teacher through the use of video recordings of the learners' performances. The present action research was intended to explore the effect of adapting textbook activities with the aim of making them more communicative on classroom communication orientation. Two English language classes were observed by the use of COLT observation scheme. In one class the teacher used textbook activities based on the guidelines provided in the book and teacher's guide without making any modifications. In the second class, the teacher modified the textbook activities to make them more consistent with CLT principles. Numerical and descriptive comparisons of the main parameters of teachers and students' verbal interactions of the study were done and the collected data were analyzed and interpreted. It was revealed that the use of textbook activities in a communicative way supports and facilitates classroom communication. The overall results lend weight to the idea that textbook activities are focal to cultivating classroom communication in EFL settings.

Keywords: classroom communication, communicative language teaching (CLT), communicative orientation language teaching (COLT) observation scheme, textbook activities

1. Introduction

Learning a second or foreign language is not an easy task. It takes courage to be a language learner as the learner has to step in his/her first language comfortable zone and face up the challenges of moving into the cultural realm of a new language with all its associated behaviors, values, cultural attitudes, practices consistent with the new language cultural norms. He is expected to connect with his cultural identity to better welcome the shifting structure of thinking, feeling and acting which surely affects his whole person (Brown, 2000). What may be most surprising, in this regard, is the fact that while it has been largely acknowledged that language learning, at its most basic level, is about communication, talking and interacting with real people, language learners get easily preoccupied with breaking the language into pieces to learn the details and achieve linguistic competence. Hence, what comes to sharp focus to them is nothing more than analytic learning and mastery of different items of grammar and structures, creating perfect sentences and practicing the learned items through controlled activities (Richards, 2006). This is not to invalidate these areas or lessen their importance, but language learners are expected to go forward and develop some other transferrable learning skills like analytic reasoning, leadership, problem solving, adaptability, teamwork, time management and communication skills, to name a few, which are needed to build a happier life, land a job of the future and improve the society.

Classroom communication is described as the interaction between the teacher and the students. The process which is basic to verbal communication is the transmission of sounds or graphemes. It is through verbal communication that the teacher addresses and gives feedback to one individual student or the whole class. Verbal communication functions as a tool in the hands of a teacher to manage classroom activities, react to students' answers or respond to self-initiated questions and, in some cases, deal with hesitations, confusions, doubts and silence on the part of students

To Barnes (1976), the negotiation that the teachers and the students in the class go through in their face-to-face communication with the aim of building a shared and clear understanding makes up classroom learning. Mehan (1979) believes that interaction is a process whereby book lessons are "accomplished". In Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT), interaction is especially highlighted as it plays both the role of a means through which learning is realized and the final goal of instruction. A lot of research works have explored the importance of classroom interaction in CLT and discussed the key function it serves (Allwright, 1981-1984; Chaudron, 1988; Moskowiz 1976; Mehall, 2020; Rahimpour & Magsoudpour, 2011; Taghizadeh & Hajhosseini, 2021; Tsui, 1996). According to Allwright (1981), the first and foremost important outcome of classroom interaction is the learning opportunities it provides. This idea was further strengthened and developed by Allwright and Bailey (1991) and Hutchinson and Torres (1994). They turn the spotlight on the need for effective management of classroom interaction and the virtual role the textbook plays in this regard. The continuous changes and innovations in views on the nature of teaching and learning and paradigms of language teaching methodology in the last 50 years have given way to textbook, as "an almost universal element of ELT teaching" (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994, p. 315) through which textbook activities can function as communication venues by either providing the learners with production and reception opportunities to engage in to be able to use the target language in a purposeful way or preparing scripts for learners to practice the language for communicative purposes.

Cunningsworth (1995) lists the multiple roles course books play in English language classes as:

- a source to provide activities for communicative interaction and learner practice
- a resource to present spoken and written materials,
- a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities,
- a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and so on,
- a syllabus and a crutch for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence (Cunningsworth ,1995, p.7)

Since late 1970s, when CLT was first introduced to the field of language teaching, it has been largely discussed, referred to and studied. CLT with its emphasis on a new perception of language as to be a social tool is marked with some key classroom features such as meaning making to be primary, contextualization and authenticity to be basic and interaction to be both the goal and the means of language learning. It combines or even replaces the traditionally dominant structural syllabi and discourages teachers from focusing on form or teach knowledge about language.

Instead, it prioritizes the use of teaching techniques that require learners to respond to situations similar to real-world environment using additional authentic learning activities, tasks, materials and settings.

Nunan and Lamb (1996) contrasted traditionalism with CLT and concluded that the advent of CLT made curriculum development much more complex as communicative curricula carter for the learner's communicative needs and embodies learning preferences. Thus, developing communicative curricula involves ascertaining information about and by learners. To Richards (2006), CLT caused a great paradigm shift in language pedagogy worldwide and brought about a re-examination of language instruction at different levels including the objectives, syllabi, teacher/learner roles, classroom aids, materials and activities, etc. An illuminating example here can be the fact that with the rise in the popularity and the adoption of CLT, communicative tasks, primarily designed to mirror learners' communicative needs for the purpose of sparking the desired communicative competence on the part of learners, made up the focal component of language teaching curricula.

To design communicative activities, the following three principles are generally found to be essential and central:

- They are centered on meaning rather than on structural rules (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).
- They are authentic and meaningful as they have real purposes and real life references; by the use of real life situations and real exchange of ideas, information and ideas, communicative activities provide a real basis for speaking and a trigger for communication (Nunan, 1989).
- They are motivating in the sense that they inspire and encourage a learner to be more attentive to other classmates, more effectively listen to and more actively speak to them; they require learners to act volitionally in asking questions and responding to others' questions. This way, they make students participate more actively class activities (Dzo'ul Millel & Jannatul Laily, 2020).

In recent decades, CLT, initially puts forth as a Western methodology in the field of language teaching (1970s), has been adopted and implemented in ESL/EFL education. Interestingly, although after years of worldwide acceptance, practice and dominance, CLT has fallen out of favor, there exist some other communicative approaches such as Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Cooperative Language Learning (CLL), and Content Based Language Teaching (CBLT) which share some of the assumptions and principle with CLT and are even regarded as the development of this teaching approach. Therefore, it can be argued that there has never been an end to communicative language teaching. In 2004, Littlewood framed meaning-focused and form-focused activities in a continuum.

- Non-communicative learning
- Pre-communicative learning
- Communicative language practice
- Structured communication
- Authentic communication

The same year and based on his communicative continuum, he proposed 'communication-oriented language teaching' (COLT) as an alternative term to CLT. He states, "COLT is uncontroversial about the goals of teaching (successful communication) but implies more flexibility regarding the means (which will vary with context)" (Littlewood, 2004, p. 325).

Adoption of CLT in both ESL and EFL countries has been rife with difficulties. One of the distinguishing features of communicative language teaching is its fundamental emphasis on the incorporation of activities with a communicative intent aiming at triggering interaction and negotiation of meaning in the language classroom among the students and creating opportunities for them to practice their acquired vocabulary and grammar. Over the years, the ever contradictory and even opposing views have questioned the appropriateness, practicality and feasibility of adopting CLT in EFL contexts. Many innovative EFL teachers have shared stories about the discomfort, hesitation and considerable resistance their students show when required to participate and cooperate in class activities no matter how much these teachers try to be tolerant, friendly and supportive of their students' comments, ideas, and questions. (Anderson, 1999; Chick, 1996; Ellis, 1994, 1996; Gonzalez, 1985; Kirkpatrick, 1985; Li, 1998; Masayuki, Takahashi, & Yoneyama, 1984; Musthafa, 2009; Nyamayedenga, 2017; Noori, 2018; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Shamin,1996;

Shoenberg, 2000; Valdes & Jhons,1991). A quick review of the available literature pertaining to adoption of CLT in the EFL context makes it clear that factors such as extrinsic constraints and teaching conditions, misconceptions about some of the main features of CLT, teacher qualifications, the perceived roles of teachers and learners, the cultural view of CLT, heterogeneous abilities and the national testing system have stood in the way of using communicative techniques effectively. Yet, with regard to the implementation of CLT as a language teaching approach in EFL contexts, the available relevant literature shows that there are more benefits than disadvantages to this shift in language teaching paradigm.

In Iran, Education, as a whole, is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. The ministry is directly responsible for setting educational policies, establishing regulations, making orientations and introducing strategies. Educational policies are primarily centralized; the decisions are not split between central government and local levels (e.g., education local boards or schools) which have arguably less authority for decision-making. In spite of worldwide remarkable advances in language teaching and the development of new technologies, over the years, Iranian English teachers have used a very limited number of approaches, methods and techniques. In the last few years, with the help of Organization of Research and Educational Planning (OREP), affiliated to the Ministry of Education, there has been a shift of attention to CLT in the curriculum of English as a foreign language at schools in Iran. In 2013, in consonance with the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) and the resultant National Curriculum innovation with a move to introduce CLT, new textbooks (called *prospect* and *vision* series) which were claimed by the developers to have embodied the principles of communicative approach were developed for junior and senior high school grades. The new set of English textbooks were issued in six volumes; *Prospect* 1, 2, and 3 textbooks for the lower secondary cycle (grades 7, 8, and 9) and *Vision* 1, 2, and 3 textbooks for the upper secondary cycle (grades 10, 11, & 12).

Taking a global view of communication as the core of high-demand skills for future, we can find the reason behind the ever-increasing demand for CLT method to be implemented in a large number of language teaching programs. Today, CLT continues to be the most promoted teaching method in language education. In the available literature on the degree of success of communicative language teaching in high schools of Iran, what has been the subject of the bulk of researches has mostly been CLT's methodology and teaching practice. Most of such studies pronounced the disparity of teaching and learning for communication that is enabling the learner to use the new language as a communicative tool. When close attention is given to the literature on the above mentioned issues, it seems that the same general problem has been looked upon from the same overall perspective. To date, little research has been carried out to examine the role textbook activities can play in changing the focus onto communication in language classes. As mentioned earlier, the currently-taught textbooks of English at high schools in Iran are often claimed by the authorities to have been revised and edited based on the new official CLT- based orientation. It is indisputable to claim that a language course in an EFL context is communicative, unless one look for the degree to which CLT's principles are substantiated in class activities to foster students communicative competence and to check the extent to which course materials benefit from communicative features.

Bagheri Nevisi & Moghadasi (2020) in their research explored the alignment of the English Textbooks with the principles and maxims of communicative language teaching. Surprisingly, they found that these books lacked sufficient pragmatic input. Besides, they reported absence of different communicative structures in these books which could lead to students' failure to communicate efficiently and appropriately v in the target language. A number of researchers (Gholami, 2015; Roohani & Alipour, 2016; Sanie & Vahid Dastjerdi, 2018; Shams, 2015; Zaferanieh & Hosseini-Maasoum, 2015) have stressed in their scholarly articles that there are serious insufficiencies in pragmatic representation and major imbalance in the frequency and inclusion of pragmatic content in Iranian high school textbooks.

The aim of the content analysis study conducted by Jamshidian et al. (2021) was to investigate the status of communication strategies (CSs) in Iranian high school English textbooks (*Vision* Series). Based on the findings, they argued that different types of CSs were not appropriately and equally included in the textbooks. They concluded that *Vision* series as teaching content must undergo modifications for the purpose of more appropriate coverage and availability of CSs.

Khazaee and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2022) conducted a content analysis of Iran's state high school textbooks to assess the level of communicativeness of activities in the brand-new English language materials (*Prospect* and *Vision* Series).

They used Littlewood's (2004) communicative continuum (discussed earlier) and found that the majority of the activities in the Vision and Prospect series focused more on forms and were related to non-communicative learning, pre-communicative language practice, and structured communication within Littlewood's (2004) continuum, with no evidence of any communicative language practice or authentic communication. It can be implied from the findings of their study that CLT is not genuinely being implemented in Iran's currently-used textbooks of English for high school students. Moreover, what takes place in the classrooms may not have been congruent with the standard notions of CLT.

The current action research aimed to explore the effect of adapting textbook activities by the teacher (guided by the research team) to make them more communicative on the classroom communication orientation using COLT observation scheme.

Method

In CLT, material should allow for a focus on form by alerting learners to the underlying forms and structures of the target language as well as on function by providing opportunities for the practice of language functions. Because the central focus of the study is on what teachers can do to adapt the textbook activities with the aim of making them more consistent with the integral features of communication, the course book materials used in the observed classes were the last two lessons of English *Book 1* from the prescribed English textbook series of the previous curriculum. As that textbook has no claim to being communicative, adaptation of the units is assumed to highlight the role of communicative features of textbook activities in this process.

Two 10th grade language classes were observed. The study was conducted nearly at the end of Iranian school year in April and May at a girls high school in South Khorasan. In one class, the teacher used the activities included in two units of the textbook without any modifications (intact ones) and performed based on the guidelines provided in the book and teacher's guide. In the second class, the same teacher used the same textbook activities she had modified with the aim of making them more consistent with CLT principles to become communication oriented and more supportive of a process-oriented model of teaching. It should be emphasized that in order to cancel out the effect of students' interest in new contents and to better guarantee future fair comparisons, nowhere in the process of modification of activities in this study, did the content of the two selected lessons undergo any sort of changes. Therefore, much effort went into keeping all the *topics* of grammar, reading comprehensions, vocabularies, and language functions of the two units safe from any modifications and changes in content.

The modifications made in the already mentioned two lessons were as follows:

- The lessons start with a section titled *Get Ready to Read*, in which an activity like a *rating quiz* or some simple *tick the answers* and *true-to-you* functions as a pre-organizer in focusing the readers' attention on the reading text.
- This section is followed by a second section titled *Before You Read* with an activity asking the students in pairs to look at the title of the reading passage and think about their personal answers to the questions. The *Reading* section which follows consists of the reading text taken from the textbook without any change. The post-reading phase starts with *Check Your Understanding* which includes the following four activities:
    a. Five *open-ended questions* with incomplete answers for the students to complete in pairs.
    b. A *True, False, Not-Given table* sub-section in which the students are asked to check the truth value and relevance of the statements and change the false one in such a way that they read as true statements.
    c. A number of items to be checked in pairs for whether they *have been talked about* / *have not been talked about* in the reading text
    d. *Critical Thinking,* done in pairs, raises questions about the truth claims made within the text; It makes the students probe the theme of the reading passage through thought-provoking questions such as "why…?" or "What are the characteristics….?" or "Is it right to …." or "How do you think X is related to Y?" or "Are any assumptions being made in this text?"
- The third section is titled *Reading Skill,* with an activity designed to draw the students' attention to one micro-skill at a time which is supposed to be helpful to their comprehension of the reading text and to provide

opportunities for its practice to make it transferrable to other reading texts. *Vocabulary Comprehension* is the third post-reading section which consists of two activity types. The first type provides opportunities to practice the vocabulary items taken from the reading text. The second type activities are aimed to introduce and practice words related to each other thematically.

- The *Grammar Spot*, as the fourth post-reading section, aims at raising awareness about language regularities through an inductive approach which demands an active role on the part of the students. The section starts with activities which call the attention of the students to the regularities followed by production activities which are intended to facilitate the integration of form and function to communicate meaning.
- The *Pronunciation* section as supplementary to the reading lesson was kept with the same teaching points but with activities which were intended to help the students to go through reception and identification of the sound image to its practice and production.
- The *Language Function* section was also kept as supplementary to the reading lesson with the same teaching points but with activities which demanded a more active role on the part of the students. The activities are intended to introduce the formulaic exchanges, practicing them to the point of automatic recall and finally using them in a role-play.

Typographic factors such as font size, text density on each page, cohesiveness and consistency of inside pictures and layout together with providing clear and obvious instructions for the learners to easily follow up and perform each activity were all given close consideration.

The current action research study was a descriptive observational one. The researchers used within-category and between-category descriptions and interpretations through focusing on frequency counts recorded for each feature of classroom communication. As for the analysis, numerical and descriptive comparisons of the main parameters of teachers and students' verbal interactions of the study were done.

COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) observation scheme designed by Frohlich, Spada, and Allen (1985), was adopted as the instrument for the collection of the data. The selection of this observational scheme was due to the fact that this scheme had been originally developed to describe as precisely as possible some of the features of communication which happen in language classrooms. The COLT observation scheme is divided into two parts (see Appendices A, B & C). For the purpose of current research, both parts of COLT observation scheme were used to observe the two classes.

Part A of COLT describes classroom events at the level of episodes and activities and categorizes them into five distinct parameters (see appendices A& C). All coding in part A, as proposed by the developers of this observation scheme, was done in real time by two observers who were both present while classroom observations were taking place. When using COLT scheme and before analyzing the data, one important point to consider was to know that *Activity Type,* the first parameter of part A, was open ended. Hence, the researchers of this study used a subordinate classification adopted by Flyman-Mattsson (1999) in their study of the students' communicative behavior in a foreign language classroom.

Part B is used to analyze and determine communicative features that exist in verbal exchanges between teachers and students and/or students and students as they occur within each activity and it was applied to the video recordings of the lessons (see appendices B & C). Time sampling procedure within activity type was followed. In other words, coding started at the beginning of each activity for one minute and after a two-minute interval, it was resumed. During the one-minute coding period, the frequency of occurrence of each sub-category was recorded by two coders. All the features of part B were coded for teachers and students except for discourse initiation and relative restriction of linguistic form. These last two items were coded for students only. It should also be mentioned that Cohen's kappa inter-rater reliability, (k=0.85) was taken for a sample of the data collected for this study which was acceptable and meaningful.

On the whole 5 teaching sessions, totaling 10 hours, were held and video recorded in each class. Two voice recorders were also used as supplements to the video camera in case the teacher or class sound was not sufficiently recorded. The captured elements were then checked against the video recorded lessons based on COLT guideline to make the observations more accurate. The videotaped lessons also helped the researcher to do an inter-rater reliability check by asking a second observer to capture the elements while watching the video-taped lessons.

Results

The frequency and the percentage numerical values for each of the subcategory points under the different headings in part A and B of COLT observation scheme were first calculated (see Appendices A, B, & C). The results in part A and B, on the whole, were based on the six sessions of teaching in each of the two classes which were equal to a total of 1080 minutes (2 lessons).

Part A was a good instrument to gather detailed reports on classroom activities at different levels including information on the time spent on each activity, participation organization, student modality, content, and materials. Part B provided numerical and descriptive comparisons of the main parameters of the teachers' verbal interactions and the students' verbal interactions, including target language, information gap, reaction to code or message and incorporation of utterances.

Having the statistical and descriptive information at hand, a numerical comparison in terms of the different components contributing to classroom communication, and a descriptive comparison with regard to the potential capacity of each category for the two classes were required to make some general inferences.

Fröhlich, Spada, and Allen (1985) offered a global score which is indicative of the degree of 'communicative orientation' of different language programs. They specified different features which represent a communicative classroom. Each feature is assigned a numerical value based on the percentage of class time spent on that feature. The total of the individual values for each feature makes up the global score. However, Fröhlich, Spada and Allen's global score provide us with results which are not reliable because of three reason: first, the number of communicative features is large and not easily manageable; second, the ratings this score needs are inherently subjective. Third, it is an unsolved problem to validly indicate that the different features are of equal theoretical importance and thus can be counted as equally communicative. To solve the problem, Flyman Mattsson (1999) proposed that the two major features in a learning environment which are communication supportive are:

- focus on meaning
- opportunity to speak

Since it is not feasible to decide whether one is more 'typical' than the other, combining the two measures would be nonsensical. Thus, in the present study, the two features are treated separately. Before turning to Figure 1, it should be noted that, as Mattsson (1999) noted, frequency of *focus on meaning* is counted under 'Content', and is realized by *other topics* along with *Language.* When the focus is on either form-only or meaning-only, there are usually no communication practices as it is easier for the learner of a language to get away with only one word or one phrase. On the other hand, frequency of opportunities to speak is also another necessary condition for communication to appear. This can be found in *student discourse initiation*, in 'Participant organization' under *Group*, in 'Content control' under *Student*, and in 'Student modality' under *Speaking.*

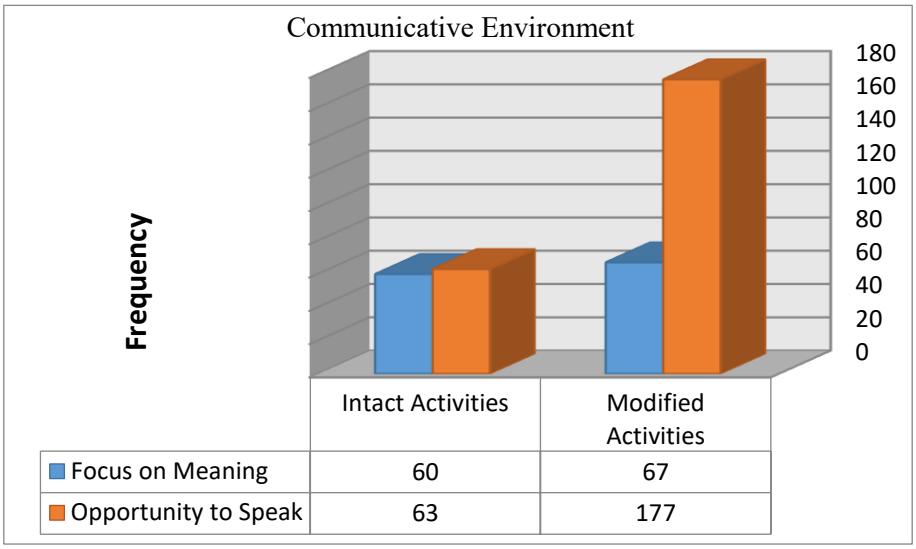

Figure 1: Communicative environment

Discussion

Based on figure 1, it can be concluded that the two classes, either when the intact textbook activities or communicative ones were used, had a fairly similar degree of focus on meaning. This may indicate that in the context of foreign language classes in Iran, a mere change of activities with the aim of making them communicative does not necessarily contribute highly to creating communicative *meaning-focused* instruction which requires learners to actively attend to the context or what they want to communicate. However, the modified activities could strongly lead to creating much more *opportunities* for the students to *speak* which accordingly resulted in an increase in classroom communication.

A numerical comparison in terms of the different components contributing to classroom communication helped us learn that not all of the communicative features of COLT scheme were meaningfully affected. A number of features were found to show wider fluctuations. It was interpreted that the features which directly contributed to classroom communication were as follows:

Student Topic Control, Group work, Mini-Control Use of Material, Focus on Meaning, Class Speaking Modality, Class Requesting Genuine Information, St/St class organization, Student Reaction to Code or Message, Broad Content Topics, Student Discourse Initiation, Material Use, Class Incorporation of Speech, Student Form Restriction, Class Giving unpredictable Information, Class Sustained /Minimal Speech (see Appendix C).

The rise in three elements of active incorporation of speech, giving unpredictable information and sustained/ minimal speech means that communicative activates set the scene to stimulate and generate classroom discourse which involves the teachers and the students. The modified activities used in the present study successfully caused the teacher and the students to exchange more unpredictable information and brought the language to life. In general, communication theorists postulate that natural language use is characterized by a high degree of unpredictability (Candlin, 1976; Widdowson 1990).

Overall, it can be understood that though no change of content or method of teaching was introduced to the classes, the class in which the teacher used modified textbook activities favored a much stronger communicative environment. Thus, on the ground that a change of activities from the prescribed ones available in the textbook to the more communicative ones gave the students much greater opportunities to initiate speech and thus negotiate meaning, it proves that there is a difference between the prescribed textbook activities and modified communicative ones in changing the focus onto communication in language classes.

Conclusion

It was earlier noted that the criteria for selection of the instructional variables which were specified in COLT scheme to be examined is their potential to describe, as precisely as possible, some discernable and observable communicative features which occur in language classrooms. The present study with the help of quantified observations for *normal* sessions revealed that most of the significant features of verbal interaction which were typical of classroom discourse, and indicators of classroom communicative behavior, received low degrees of focus and attention. This may suggest that the focus on communication in language classes at senior high school level (10th grade) is to some extent at a low level. A full discussion of the reasons why communication in language classes of Iran is low is beyond the scope of this study. But the fact is that low level of communication is not limited to Iran. It is indisputable that classroom communication is a recurrently reported problem in many other countries, where English is taught as a foreign language including China, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Turkey to name a few. In such countries, CLT is said to be a horse of a different color*;* problems associated with CLT in such settings are mainly rooted in the fact that CLT works on the basis of the theory of language as communication and targets to teach language through communication to advance students' communicative competence.

The plethora of research have shown that CLT is found to fail to integrate to non-Western learning contexts mainly due to clashing with many intervening factors with the shortage or lack of genuine opportunity to communicate in the target language both inside and outside the classroom counted as the most important hindering factor. This state of affairs gets exacerbated in Asian countries where students are generally reserved and introvert. However, the reason which is most relevant to the discussion of the present study is that, in Iran, as discussed earlier, English is taught as a foreign language in an environment for practice which is highly context-restricted. Under such a condition, as Ghorbani (2012) remarks "language learning is shaped largely by classroom practices, including the use of particular textbooks and the teacher's management of classroom work, without substantial support from social contexts outside the classroom" (p.132). It can be concluded that the more standardly and authentically communicative the textbook activities are adapted to be, the more opportunities for the practice and achievement of communicative competence are created. The overall results lend weight to the idea that textbook activities are focal to cultivating classroom communication in EFL settings. This study may have implications for teacher researchers, pre-service and in-service teachers to view communicative language teaching from a socio-material perspective. Through this perspective, they better understand the role instructional materials and textbook activities may play in changing communication orientation in English language classrooms.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The present study had certain limitations which need to be underscored, most of which stem from the qualitative nature and the design of the study:

The first limitation is related to the qualitative design of the study. We made a necessarily limited number of observations for our action research study. It should also be noted that having two classes to be studied is not large enough to consider the research results and findings generalizable. Future research should consider the themes this study identified as predictions and hypotheses and construct the same research to be conducted with larger groups. Another point which posited limitations to the generalization of the obtained results is related to the number of textbook lessons taught in the teaching sessions. The results would have been more valid if the selection of lessons was not limited just to two lessons and to grade 10 of high school.

A further limitation pertains to the data collection procedure. The present study may have yielded more inclusive and comprehensive results with triangulation through analyzing results from multiple data sources. For example, a survey questionnaire for teachers and/or students and in-depth structured, semi structured or unstructured interviews with the students can be incorporated. In the present study, teachers and learners were neither questioned nor interviewed. The study would have provided a better understanding and interpretation of the effect of introduction of communicative activities in textbook lessons on classroom communication if the students were questioned or interviewed before the start and after the completion of teaching sessions. Under such conditions, the students' perception of the change in classroom activities would have been discovered to see how pleased they were with the changes in the lessons.

Finally, as the heads of the organization of education affairs and the school manager did not, at any terms, agree with taking the real teaching time of the two classes and thus holding the teaching sessions in school schedule timetable, and also because the researcher of this study needed to attend the teaching sessions to do the audio-video recordings and solve any unexpected problems, the classes were held out of the school hours. Had this limitation been avoided, closer to natural teaching settings would have been held and more reliable data would have been gathered.

Acknowledgements

Especial thanks go to Mohammad Mehraban for his generous helps on all the hard job of video recording and film making this study needed and to Niki Hosseini, who kindly, as the second rater, did the observation coding. Our grateful thanks are extended towards Fariba Boujaran, the school principal, who didn't hesitate to help.

References

Allwright, R. (1981). What do we want teaching materials for? *ELT Journal, 36*(1), 5-18. http://www.uefap.com/tefsp/bibliog/allwright_materials.pdf

Allwright, R. (1984). The importance of interaction in classroom language learning. *Applied Linguistics, 5*(2), 156–171. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/5.2.156

Allwright, R. L., & Bailey, K. M. (1991). *Focus on the language classroom: An introduction to classroom research for language teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Anderson, N. (1999). *Second-language reading: issues and strategies.* Boston, M. A. Heinle & Heinle.

Bagheri Nevisi, R., & Moghadasi, A. (2020). Content analysis of Iranian high school English textbooks in terms of politeness markers, speech acts, and language functions. *Issues in Language Teaching*, *9*(2), 155-184. doi: 10.22054/ilt.2021.54493.529

Barnes, D. (1976). *From communication to curriculum*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th Ed.). New York: Longman.

Candlin, C. N. (1976). *Communicative language teaching and the debt to pragmatics*. In C. Rameh (ed), *Georgetown University round table on language and linguistics*. Georgetown University Press.

Chaudron, C. (1988). *Second language classrooms: Research on teaching and learning.* Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Chick, K. (1996). Safe-talk: collusion in apartheid education. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the Language Classroom,* p. 21–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your coursebook*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Dzo'ul Millel, A., & Jannatul Laily, N. (2020). Communicative activities in language teaching and learning process: a view of a teacher training session. In: *International Conference on English Language Teaching (ICONELT 2019)*. do: 10.2991/assehr.k.200427.001

Ellis, G. (1994). *The appropriateness of the communicative approach in Vietnam: An interview study in intercultural communication (Master's thesis).* La Trobe University, Victoria, Australia.

Ellis, G. (1996). How culturally appropriate is the communicative approach? *ELT Journal*, *50*(3), 213-218. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/50.3.213

Flyman Mattsson, A. (1999). Students' communicative behavior in a foreign language classroom. *Working Papers 47*, 39-57. http://www.ling.lu.se/disseminations/pdf/47/Flyman.pdf

Fröhlich, M., Spada, N., & Allen, P. (1985). Differences in the communicative orientation of L2 classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly, 19*, 27-57. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586771

Gholami, J. (2015). Is there room for pragmatic knowledge in English books in Iranian high schools? *English Language Teaching*, *8*(4), 39-51.

Ghorbani, M. R., & Nezamoshari'e, M. (2012). Cooperative learning boosts EFL students' grammar achievement. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *2*(7), 1465-1472.

Gonzalez, A. (1985). Communicative language teaching in the rural areas: How does one make the irrelevant relevant? In B. K. Das (ed) *Communicative language teaching anthology series 14.* Singapore : SEAMEO RELC.

Hutchinson, T., & Torres, E. (1994). The textbooks as agents of change. *ELT Journal, 48*(4), 315-328. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/48.4.315

Jamshidian, F. et al. (2021). The stance of communication strategies in Iran's high school English textbooks (Vision Series). *Journal of Language and Translation*, *11*(2), 213-229. doi: 10.30495/ttlt.2021.682823

Karim, K. M. R. (2004). Teacher'' perceptions, attitudes and expectations about communicative language teaching (CLT) in post-secondary education in Bangladesh. *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field*, *3*(9), 111-116.

Khazaee, H., & Pourhosein Gilakjani, A. (2022). Assessing the level of communicativeness of activities in Iran's FRDE-based state high school English textbooks (Prospect and Vision Series). *The Journal of Asia TEFL, 19* (3), 740-1140. doi:10.18823/asiatefl.2022.19.3.25.1098

Kirkpatrick, T. A. (1985) .The role of communicative language teaching in secondary schools- with special reference to teaching in Singapore. In B. K. Das (ed) *Communicative language teaching anthology series 14.* Singapore: SEAMEO RELC. pp. 171-194.

Krashen, S. D., & Terrell, T. D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. London: Prentice Hall Europe.

Li, D. (1998). It's always more difficult than you plan and imagine: Teachers' perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in South Korea. *TESOL Quarterly*, *32*(4), 677-703. doi:10.2307/3588000

Littlewood, W. (2004). The task-based approach: Some questions and suggestions. *ELT Journal*, *58*(4), 319-326. https:// doi:org/10.1093/elt/58.4.319

Litz, D. R. A. (2005). Textbook evaluation and ELT management: A South Korean case study. *Asian EFL Journal*. https://www.asian-efl-journal.com/Litz_thesis.pdf

Masayuki, S., Takahashi, M., & Yoneyama, A. (1984). Communicative language teaching and local needs. *ELT Journal*, *38*(3), 170-177. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/38.3.170

Mehall, S. (2020). Purposeful interpersonal interaction in online learning: What is it and how is it measured? *Online Learning*, *24*(1), 182-204. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1249281.pdf

Mehan, H. (1979). *Learning lessons: Social organizations in the classroom.* Cambridge, M.A Thesis: Harvard University Press.

Moskowiz, G. (1976). The classroom interaction of outstanding foreign language teachers. *Foreign Language Annals, 9*(2), 135-143. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1976.tb02639.x

Musthafa, B. (2009). Communicative language teaching in Indonesia: Issues of theoretical assumptions and challenges in the classroom practice. *Journal of Southeast Asian Education*, *2*(2). ERIC database, (ED462833.

Nyamayedenga, S. (2017). *The implementation of communicative language teaching in primary schools*. PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Noori, A. (2018). Communicative language teaching (CLT) in EFL context: Exploring Afghan EFL lecturers' perceived challenges in implementing CLT. *International Journal of Research*, *5*(15), 1049-1063.

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Nunan, D., & Lamb, C. (1996). *The self-directed teacher, managing the learning process*. Melbourne Australia: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D., & Lamb, C. (1996). *The self-directed teacher, managing the learning process*. Melbourne Australia: Cambridge University Press.

Rahimpour, M., & Magsoudpour, M. (2011). Teacher-students' interactions in task-based vs form-focused instruction. *World Journal of Education*, *1* (1), 171-178.

Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C. (1998). *Beyond training*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roohani, A., & Alipour, J. (2016). An investigation into the use of speech acts and language functions in Iranian high school English textbooks. *International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning, 6*(3), 25-33.

Sanie, N., & Vahid Dastjerdi, H. (2018). Greeting speech act forms in Iranian junior high school textbooks: Prospect series vs. Four Corners series. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching & Research, 6*(23)*,* 51-68.

Sato, K., & Kleinsasser, R. (1999). Communicative language teaching (CLT): Practical understanding. *The Modern Language Journal, 83*(4), 494-517. https://www.jstor.org/stable/330522

Schoenberg, I.E. (2000). *Focus on grammar: A basic course for reference and practice* (2nd Ed.). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Seedhouse, P. (1996). Classroom interaction: Possibilities and impossibilities. *ELT Journal, 50*(1), 16-24. doi:10.1093/elt/50.1.16

Shamin, F. (1996). Learner resistance to innovation in classroom methodology. In H, Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the language classroom* (pp.105-121). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shams, A. (2015). Speech acts and language functions found in the conversation models of Prospect 1. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World, 9*(2), 145-155.

Sheldon, L. (1988). Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELT Journal*, *42*(4), 237-246. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/42.4.237

Taghizadeh, M., & Hajhosseini, F. (2021). Investigating a blended learning environment: Contribution of Attitude, interaction, and quality of teaching to satisfaction of graduate students of TEFL. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, *30*(5), 459-469. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-020-00531-z

Tomlinson, B. (2011). *Materials development in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Toprakcı, N., & Özaydınlı, B. (2020). Textbooks in English language teaching in view of globalization, localization and glocalisation. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, *8*(2), 853-883.

Tsui, A. (1996). Reticence and anxiety in second language learning. In K. M. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom: Qualitative research in second language education* (pp. 145-167). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Valdes, A. I., & Jhones, A. C. (1991). Introduction of communicative language teaching in tourism in Cuba. *TESL Canada Journal, 8*(2), 57-63. doi: https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v8i2.588

Widdowson, H. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zaferanieh, E., & Hosseini-Maasoum, S. M. (2015). Pragmatic representations in Iranian high school English textbooks. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, *8*(16), 187-198.

Appendices

Appendix A

Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT): Part A

An Observation Scheme

School: Grdae(s) Date: Observer:
Teacher: Lesson (Minutes): Subject:

Time	Activity	Participation Organization							
		Class			Group		Combin		
		T c/ St	St c/st	Choral	Same	Different	Individual	Gro/ Indi	

Student Modality					Materials										
					Text			Type				Use			
Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Other	Minimal	Extended	Audio	Visual	Pedagogical	SemiPedagogical	Non-pedagogical	High Control	Semi Control	Mini Control	

Content																										
Man		Language				Other Topics																Topic Control		
						Narrow				Limited					Broad									
Procedure	Discipline	Form	Function	Discourse	Sociolinguist	Classroom	Stereotype	Per/ Bio	Other	Personal	Rout/ Soc	Fam/Com	School T	Other	Abstract	Pers/Ref	Imagination	World	Other	T	T/S	S

Appendix B

Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT): Part B

An Observation Scheme

Teacher Verbal Interaction

Communicative Feature		Target Lag		Informa Gap Give inf /Requ inf				Sust Speech		React C/M	Incorporation of Student Utterance					
No Talk	Off Talk	L1	L2	**Predictable**	**Unpredictable**	**Pseudo**	**Genuine**	Minimal	Sustained	Explicit Code Reaction	**No Incor**	**Repetition**	**Paraphrase**	**Comment**	**Expansion**	**Elaboration**

Student Verbal Interaction

	Target Lag			**Informa Gap Give inf /Req inf**				**Sustained Speech**			**Form Restriction**			**Reac C/M**	**Incorporation of Student/Teacher**					
Choral	**L1**	**L2**	**Disco-initi**	**Predictable**	**Unpredicted**	**Pseudo**	**Genuine**	**Ultra-Min**	**Minimal**	**Sustained**	**Restricted**	**Limited**	**unrestricte**	**Explicit Code Reaction**	**No Incor**	**Repetition**	**Paraphrase**	**Comment**	**Expansion**	**Elaboration**

Appendix C

Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) category definition

COLT Observation Scheme: Definition of Categories

Part A: Description of Classroom Activities

This part describes classroom events at the level of activity. Each activity is described with reference to five parameters as follows:

I. Activity type
II. Participant organization
III. Content
IV. Student modality
V. Materials

Each parameter includes several subsections. Though these subsections are intended to serve a descriptive purpose, their selection is theoretically motivated in that they reflect current theories of communicative competence and other issues in first and second or foreign language learning. The five parameters of part A are described below:

Activity type: This parameter is open ended, that is, not predetermined descriptors have to be checked off by the observer. It was left open so that the scheme could accommodate the wide variety of activities occurring in various second or foreign programs at different age levels.

Participant organization: This parameter describes three basic patterns of organization for classroom interactions:

1. *Whole class*
    - *a.* Teacher to student or class, and vice versa
    - *b.* Student to student, or student to class and vice versa
    - *c.* Choral work by the students
2. *Group work*
    - a. groups all work on the same task
    - b. groups work on different task
3. *Group and individual work*
    - a. Individual seat work (students work on their own, all on the same task or on different tasks).
    - b. Group/individual work (Some students are involved in grop work, others on their own).

Content: This parameter describes the subject matter of the activities. Three major content areas have been differentiated as follows:

1. *Management*
    - a. Classroom procedures
    - b. Disciplinary routines
2. *Explicit focus on language*
    - a. Form (grammar)
    - b. Vocabulary (pronunciation)
    - c. Function (illocutionary acts)
    - d. Discourse which relates to the way the sentences combine into cohesive and coherent sequences
    - e. Sociolinguistics which refers to the features of utterances which make them appropriate to particular social contexts
3. *Other topics*
    - a. Narrow range of reference
    - b. Limited range of reference
    - c. Broad range of reference
4. *Topic control*

a. Control by teacher
b. Control shared by teacher and students
c. Control by students

Student modality: This section identifies the various skills which may be involved in a classroom activity. The focus is on the students, and the purpose is to discover whether they are listening, speaking, reading or writing, or whther these skills are occurring in combination.

Materials: This parameter introduces categories to describe the material used in connection with classroom activities. In addition to the type of materials involved (written, audio, visual) consideration is given to the original source or purpose of the materials, and to the way in which they are used. The categories for materias are as follows:

1. *Types of materials*
   a. Text
   b. Audio
   c. Visual
2. *Length of text*
   a. Minimal
   b. Extended
3. *Source/Purpose f materials*
   a. Pedagogic
   b. Semi-pedagogic
   c. Non-pedagogic
4. *Use of materials*
   a. Highly controlled
   b. Semi controlled
   c. Minimally controlled

Part B : Communicative Features

The second part of COLT analyses the communicative features of verbal exchange between teachers and students as they occur within each activity and is divided into teacher verbal interaction and student verbal interaction. This part of the COLT observation scheme consists of an analysis of the communicative features occurring within each activity. So far, the following seven communicative features have been isolated:

I. Use of target language
II. Information gap
III. Sustained speech
IV. Reaction to code or message
V. Incorporation of preceding utterances
VI. Discourse initiation
VII. Relative restriction of linguistic form

All the features are coded for teachers and students, with the exception of discourse initiation and relative restriction of linguistic form, which are coded for students only.

Use of target language: This communicative feature is designed to measure the extent to which the target language is used in the classroom. It is covered by two categories in the coding system: *L1* refers to use of the first language, and *L2* refers to use of the second, or target, language.

Information gap: It refers to the extent to which the information requested and / or exchanged is unpredictable, that is, not known in advance. The categories designed to capture this feature in the COLT scheme are the following:

1. *Requesting information*
   a. Pseudo-requests (The speaker already possesses the information requested).
   b. Genuine requests (The information requested is not known in advance).

2. *Giving information*
    a. Relatively predictable (The message is easily anticipated in that there is a very limited range of information that can be given. In the case of responses one answer is possible semantically, although there may be different correct grammatical realizations).
    b. Relatively unpredictable (The message is not easily anticipated in that there is a wide range of information that can be given. If a number of responses are possible, they provide different information).

Sustained speech: It is intended to measure the extent to which speakers engage in extended discourse, or restrict their utterances to a minimal length of one sentence, clause or word. The categories designed to measure this feature are:

1. Ultra-minima (utterances which consists on one word- coded for student speech only).
2. Minimal (utterances which consist of one clause or sentence-for the teacher, one word utterances are coded as minimal).
3. Sustained speech (utterances which are longer than one sentence, or which consists of at least two main clauses).

Reaction to code or message: This communicative feature is closely related to the content parameter of part A- the point at issue being whether an exchange is to focus on the language code(that is grammatical correctness) or on the message, or meaning, being conveyed. Explicit code reaction, defines as" A correction of other explicit statements which draws attention to the linguistic incorrectness of an utterance."

Incorporation of preceding utterances: In conversation there are many ways in which participants may react to each other's contributions. To allow coding for a limited selection of reactions to preceding utterances, six categories have been established and ordered according to their potential for stimulating further topic related discourse, as follows:

1. *No incorporation*: No feedback or reaction is given.
2. *Repetition:* Full or partial repetition of previous utterance(s).
3. *Paraphrase*: Completion and/ or reformulation of previous utterances.
4. *Comment*: Positive or negative comment (not correction) on previous utterance(s).
5. Expansion: Extension of the comment of preceding utterance(s) through the addition of related information.
6. *Elaboration:* Requests for further information related to the subject matter of the preceding utterance(s).

Discourse initiation: An important principle of communicative language teaching is that student should be encouraged to initiate discourse themselves, instead of always having the role of responding to questions imposed on them. To measure the frequency of self-initiated turns by students in different types of classrooms, the category *Discourse initiation* has been included in the coding scheme.

Relative restriction of linguistic form: *L2* learners are typically expected to mimic specific grammatical patterns in repletion or substitution drills, and are rarely encouraged to experiment or to use language freely. To permit an investigation of the effect of different degrees of restriction on the development of *L2* proficiency, three subcategories have been proposed.

1. *Restricted use:* The production or manipulation of one specific form is expected, as in a transformation or substitution drill.
2. *Limited restriction:* There is a choice of more than one linguistic form but the range is very narrow, e.g. responses to Yes/No questions, statements about the date, time of day, etc.
3. *Unrestricted use:* There is no expectation of any particular linguistic form, as in free conversations, oral reports, or personal diary writings.