Teacher's Proficiency, and the Communicative Approach in Enhancing Students' Performance in English Language Learning

PhDc. Hysen Kasumi

English Faculty, AAB University, Prishtinë, Kosovë

hysen.kasumi@universitetiaab.com

Abstract

Even though we live in the century of constructivism, where teaching is based on student-centered model of constructivist approach, again the teacher plays a key role in teaching and learning. Therefore, our research has to do with the literature review, regarding teacher's qualities, skills and knowledge to fit with the new experiences, needs and challenges. In our research, we used the qualitative method by observing the English language teachers and their uses of the English teaching methods, to continue with the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching Syllabus in some urban and rural schools of Republic of Kosovo. Furthermore, there was also conducted an empirical research regarding student performance based on the four language skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. It was also used the experimental method to see the differences of students' performance, of those who are taught using the Communicative Language Teaching Methodand those who are taught with other methods.

Keywords: English teacher; teaching and learning; teaching methods; Communication Language Teaching; Kosovo curriculum.

1. Introduction

When speaking about the Students' Performance we might have in our mind a lot of variables ranging from the methods used by the teachers, students' motivation, the class size and the states curriculum. However, one of the key role or variable on the students' outcomes must be the teacher and the teaching. This is the reason why we decided to do this research in some schools of the Republic of Kosova in urban and rural area in order to see the situation on the field regarding the students outcomes in English language as well as the way the teachers work, what kind of the method they use, as well as if they have the adequate qualification to work as English Language teachers.

2. Teacher's proficiency in English Language Teaching

Learning involves understanding, interpretation, reflection, and strengthening of current knowledge, experience, skills, values, concepts, and preferences. It is calculated through synthesize and following a pattern of growth and development of humans, animals, or other non-living objects. This should be taken as a process and not as a combination of facts and theories(Khalid, 2015, p. 313).

Behaviorism was a very popular school of thought in the first half of the twentieth century in America. However, many psychologists strongly criticized behaviorist theories. Such as Noam Chomsky (1959) argues that language is a phenomenon which cannot solve by the behaviorist. (Joseph G.Johnson and Ann L. Weber, 2006).

Our conception of teaching and learning is based on a constructivist epistemology. According to constructivism, knowledge does not exist as external to the learner. Better to say, individual students construct their own meanings based on their previous experiences. Learning is a result of the construction, collaboration, reflection and negotiation in a rich context in which education is set (Charalambos Vrasidas and Marina S McIsaac, 2001, p. 129).

(Alan Pritchard and John Woollard, 2010, pp. 26-28), when speaking about constructivism they stop at cooperative and collaborative classes, adding that this makes students to support and help each other. These aiding activities include doing skills, appearing skills, showing (knowledge) and explanation (meaning).

As in other areas of Economics and Law, as well as in education (teaching) is almost a longstanding debate whether teaching is the art or science. If it is an art then not all students can learn because it requires talent, skills, intuition, and creativity, as for a painter or a poet. On the other hand, if it is science, teaching requires the implementation of plans, policies, objectives and goals, instruments and methods which should be made in class (Musai, "Psikologji Edukimi Zhvillimi, të nxënit, mësimdhënia", 1999, pp. 13-30).

In a professional teacher with the artistic elements, Flanders cited by (Musai, "Psikologji Edukimi Zhvillimi, të nxënit, mësimdhënia", 1999, p. 19) will say that communication goes beyond speech or writing in which are included: body language, gestures, intonation of voice and eye contact.

:*"The teacher is defined as a person, whose personal activity involves the transmission of knowledge, views and skills which are designated for students enrolled in an educational program".*(OECD, " Teaching Matters (attracting, developing and Retaining effective teachers)", 2005)

Today's teacher should be demanding of his students to perseve in order to achieve its objectives, to have success and eventually a good performance of his students at the end of a semester or school year. (Matrosov, 2011) also emphasizes that socialization, education, and development of student harmony are among the most important tasks of teachers.

On the basis of appropriate assessment information, the teacher selects materials and teaching strategies, including activities in the field of visual arts, to develop students' abilities to understand and produce English. English teacher uses English language which lies at the appropriate level of development and understanding by his students. He knows how to analyze errors of students in speaking and writing skills in order to understand how to plan differentiated instruction. Teacher allows students to express their thoughts in different ways, even including their mother tongue where possible. The teacher makes clear teaching strategies, taking into account various factors in planning and developing the English language teaching (Credentialing, 2013, pp. 7-13).

3. Constructive theory and CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) in English Language Learning

Most authors, stated that learning a foreign language in the past considered asmechanical. They also put emphasis on precision and accuracy of a language. My opinion is that this method makes student highly dependent from the teacher, not givingmuch opportunities to students to communicate in a relaxed way, among teachers and students, as well as students themselves. The consructive theory with the method of communication has a different point of viewcompared to some other methods where the student becomes the centre of the class and where the teacher is only a faccilitator.

(Richards, 2006) edescribes learning through Communication as follows:

- Interactivitybetween language learners and speakers.
- Creating a colaburalist (cooperative) meaning.
- Establish a meaningful interactivity through a language.
- Learning through a student participation fitbeck when they learn or use a language.
- Being carefully about the language they hear (the input) and attempt to incorporate new forms with anyone who develops communicative competences.
- Attempt of useing the language and experiment with various forms the language.

The broad aim of CLT is to apply theoretical perspective of communicative approach making communicative competence a purpose of teaching and accepting interconnection of a language and communication (Diane, 2000).

(Richards, 2006) when speaking about his experienxe in a class where is used CLT, he speaks according to his class observations. Based on these observations he comes out with the following principles:

Whenever possible "authentic language" should be used – a language that is used in a real context.

Being able to convay the goals of speaker and writer, is part of being competent in communication.

English as (target language) is a tool for communication in the classroom, and not just the object of study.

A function may have different linguistic forms. Since the focus of the course is the real use of language, then it is presented along with a wide range of varieties of linguistic forms. We should emphasis the process of communication but not on language forms.

Games are important, as they have clear features, shared with real communicative events.

Also, the speaker takes immediate/instant feet back by the listener, no matter if he / she have made a successful communication.

As activity as a goal has the fluency of a language, the teacher does not correct the student but takes notes for the students mistakes and later discusses with the class.

The essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication in order to allow them to develop their communicative competence. The elaboration of what we know as CLT can be traced to concurrent 20th-century developments in linguistic theory and language learning curriculum design both in Europe and in North America. (Savignon, 2006). According to the Framework of Kosovo curriculum, a good curriculum is a system highly dependent on the environment. It may consist of completely different elements, such as teacher training, qualification standards, political expectations and traditions (Ministry of Education, 2011). Kosovo curriculum strongly emphasizes the CLT. This relates to the (laissez- faire) curriculum, where the student is independent to communicate and to optimize the topic or situation to talk about, but at the same time it has a relationship with critical curriculum where specific emphasis is on learning the language with the sole purpose of using it in situations outside school, such as airports, restaurants, shops, streets.

Competencies include an integrated and coherent system of knowledge, skills and attitudes applicable and transferable, which will help students to face the challenges of the digital era, the free market economy and based on knowledge, in a world of interdependent relationships. Competences provided by the Curriculum Framework are derived from the overall goals of undergraduate education and define key learning outcomes, which should reach by students in a progressive and sustained during undergraduate education system. (Ministry of Education, 2011)

Speaking about CLT characteristics (Richards, 2006), emphesis that people learn one language when they use it to do things, rather than by studying its functions. According to this, we can say that the students' motivation to learn a specific language was because of the need.

According to scholars of CLT, it is important to speak a language but not to tell me how language works. English of twenty-first century should be the English of communication, where people want to be able to communicate among themselves and therefore researchers of English language when speaking about English language pronunciation and terminology, use different names for their English language speaking, such as: American English, British English, Chinese English, Albanian English, Russian English, (Richards, 2006).

4. Research Methodology

In our research, we used the qualitative method by observing the English language teachers and their uses of the English teaching methods.

We conducted experiments in public schools across urban and rural regions in Kosovo. By employing the CLT method, which we developed in a teaching syllabus, we were able to observe changes in student performance that related to the CLT methods used and which contrasted with other methods such as ESA.

A sample of 150 students participated in the experiment. The study was conducted in the school "Hivzi Sylejmani" localized in an urbanized locale of Fushë Kosovo, "Luarasi' school localized in Prishtina and "Ulpijana" school in the rural periphery of Gadime-Lypjan.

At the beginning of the school year, tenth-year students are commonly tested with KET (Key English Test). Tenth grade can be considered as a transitory class where Kosovo students progress lower middle school proficiency to upper middle school qualities. The test measures student performance of students prior to the application of CLT. This testing measures whether tenth-graders possess the necessary knowledge required from this age group according to Kosovo curriculum. At the end of the school year, student knowledge is re-assessed by means of PET (Preliminary English Test). In contrast to

ISSN 2411-9598 (Print)
ISSN 2411-4103 (Online)

European Journal of
Language and Literature Studies

September-December 2015
Volume 1 Issue 3

KET, this test evaluates student performance once CLT has been applied. It is additionally an ideal means to compare the performances vis-a-vis experimental and control groups.

5. Results

Regarding the low performance of students of the control groups, was that teachers in rural areas even urban locations were unqualified as teachers of English language. Throught the observation of the tenth grade we came to the conclusion that three out offour teachers of the English language course were unqualified for the English language. To prove this fact we referred the statistics by (Makolli, English Language Teachers according to Kosovo Municipalities, 2014) which states that out of 2892 teachers 39 did not declared about their qualification, 1587 were unqualified and only 1266 were qualified as Eglish language teachers.

Figure I. Statistics about English language teachers in Republic of Kosovo.

English Language Teachers
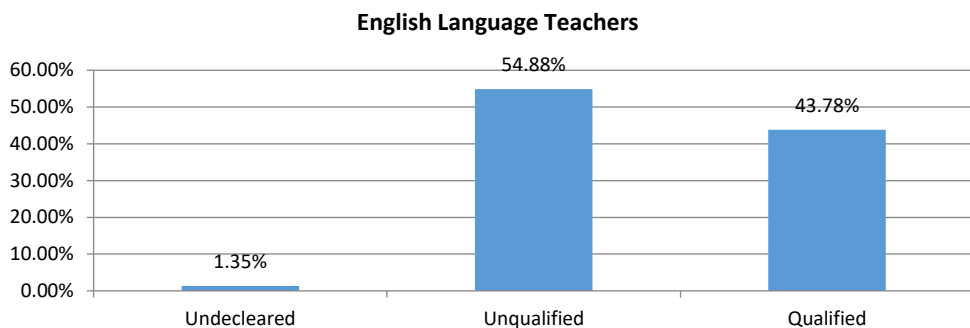
Some characteristics of English teachers through the observation method

Grammatical instructions: Instructions and presented grammatical patterns relatively good. Correction of grammatical errors is in an immediate way.

Syllabus: Content standards defined in the educational syllabus poor, defined content standards for each activity relatively good and related to the content presented. However, there were no clear objectives where students can demonstrate their achievements as indicators of performance. Also there was no documentation notes collected for presentation of learning and student achievement.

The methods applied in the preparation of lesson/teaching: Language presentation methods are not identifiable in the syllabus and in the presentation. However, it is obvious the use of the ESA method (Engage - Study - Activate) as a method of use being applicable method in the syllabus of the course books 'Headway Pre-intermediate', which are used by all teachers of the tenth grade as MEST directive .

Basic techniques used in the classroom: The teacher starts the class in time, gets absences of students, and begins giving instructions, there is not an eased / comfort prepared material except course books. The teacher does not listen students' responses with attention; there is not a satisfactory teacher – student relationship. However, it has a satisfactory performance throughout the lesson. There is not a boom in the classroom and also neither a summary at the beginning of class. There is a lack of colorful / variety of classroom activities. Lack of the overhead projectors and CD player to develop audio-visual exercises, so students can not develop listening and speakingskills. The only developed skill is reading and subsequent exercises dealing with this skill and a grammar exercises as well. Furthermore, there is a lack of writing, creativity, speaking and negotiation. The use of the table / black boards is done in an appropriate / proper way.

English language teachers and professionalism: The level of English satisfactory for the Pre-intermediate level of students, with some shortcomings in terms of grammar accuracy during teaching. Pronunciation and intonation of the teacher satisfying and appropriate for the English teaching level of students. The teacher speaks clearly and audibly for the

entire class. He is also a well organized with time at the beginning as well as at the end of the class. Teacher's appearance, ways of teacher's behavior, confidence, authority and professional distance is excellent with the exception for the respect of students which is not at the right level.

Teacher-student interaction and student-student: The teacher does not encourage student- student and teacher-student interaction and between students there is no use of the target language, in our case English language. Also there are no student-centered activities, but there is a frontal lecturing where the teacher talks and the students listen, which more resembles to direct method of teaching and the behavior theory. Contextualization and personification of the material is not possible and the teacher does not have a strategy to improve the students' errors. Appropriate student-teacher and student-student relationship is not at the required level and there is not an encouragement of students to participate actively. On the other hand the teacher's enthusiasm, eye contact, humor, body language and the competence to students'respond is not missing. However, the teacher fails to understand the lack of understanding of learners/students and does not help them with student-student interaction.
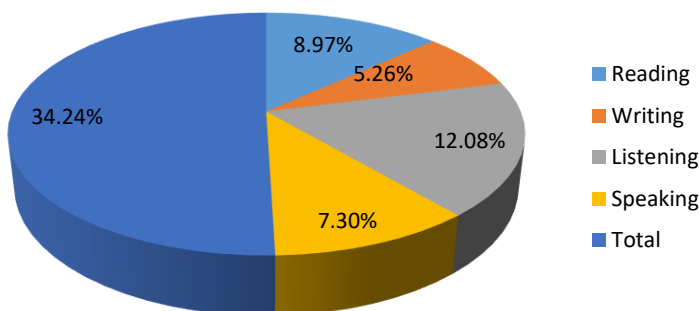
The performance of students using KET and PET testing

In Graph 1 and 2 we can see the statistics by using the KET (Key English Test) and as seen the performance of students in English language was better in urban location than rural one. This is due to the teachers experience and education as the teachers in urban locations are statistically more educated that in rural area.

Graph. 1. Values of basic statistical parameters for variables under investigationKET Urban Testing
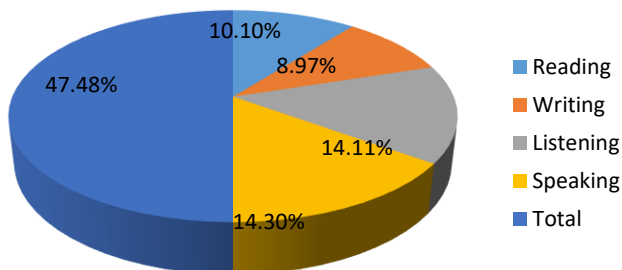
Graph. 2.Values of basic statistical parameters for variables underinvestigation KET Rural Testing

ISSN 2411-9598 (Print)
ISSN 2411-4103 (Online)

European Journal of
Language and Literature Studies

September-December 2015
Volume 1 Issue 3

According to the Statistics of Graph.3.and 4. We can see that after the implementation of CLT Syllabus we gained a much better result with the experimental groups. This is due to the training of the teachers that we did of how to implement the CLT Method. So, even in rural area we gained a highly satisfying result as teachers knew how to implement the CLT Syllabus.

Graph. 3. - PET Controller Groups
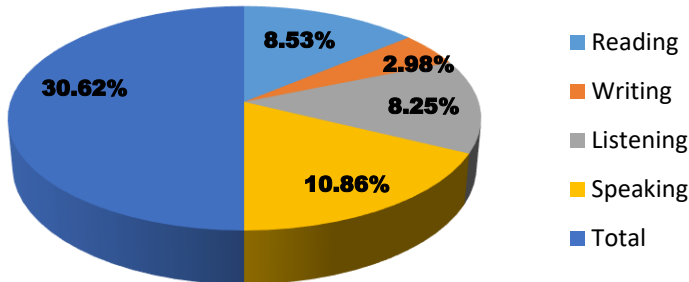
Graph..4.PETExperimental Groups
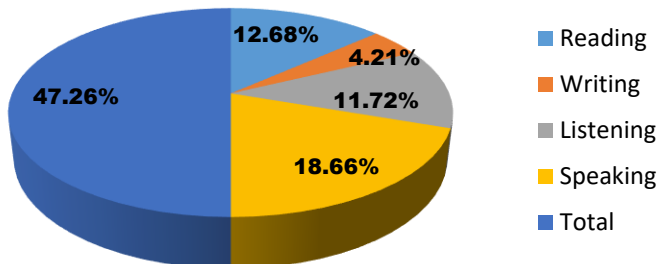
6. Discussions and Conclusions

We can conclude that students' performance in English Language was highly successful in urban area due to the teachers performance and teachers education and on the other hand, in rural area we concluded that teachers where we did the research did not have adequate education as English teachers. As a result we came to the conclusion that the students' performance in rural area was not satisfying.

Another fact is that after the implementation of CLT Syllabus and training of the teachers with the CLT Syllabus we had a totally different situation with the rural area. So, the experimental groups have a highly better result compared to the control groups.

References

[1] Alan Pritchard and John Woollard. (2010). Psychology for the Classroom:Constructivism and Social Learning. New York: Routledge.

[2] Charalambos Vrasidas and Marina S McIsaac. (2001). Integrating Technology in Teaching and Teacher Education: Implications for Policy and Curriculum Reform. Education Media International , 129.

[3] Credentialing, C. o. (2013, March). California Teaching Performance Expectations. Retrieved March 7, 2015, from http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/adopted-TPEs-2013: http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/adopted-TPEs-2013.pdf

[4] Della Chiesa, B., J. Scott and C. Hinton. (2012). Languages in a Global World: Learning for Better Cultural Understanding, Educational Research and Innovation. OECD Publishing.doi: 10.1787/9789264123557-en.

[5] Diane, L. (2000). "Techniques and Principles in language Teaching". Published by: Oxford University press 2000.

[6] Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The 2010s Communicative language teaching in the 21st century The 'principled communicative approach'. 34th National Convention of TESOL , 33- 42.

[7] Harmer, J. (2003). " how to Teach English" (An introduction to the practice of English language teaching). Printed in Malaysia, Malaysia.

[8] Joseph G.Johnson and Ann L. Weber. (2006). Introduction to Psychology (second Ed ed.). New York: Collins.

[9] Khalid, M. A. (2015). Educational Theories of Cognitive Development. Journal of Educational and Social Research, Vol. 5.

[10] Matrosov, V. L. (2011). The New Schoolteacher for the New Russian School. Russian Education And Society.

[11] Ministria e Arsimit, S. d. (2001). http://www.masht-gov.net. Retrieved Shkurt 2012, from http://www.masht-gov.net/advCms/documents/Korniza%20e%20Kurrikulit%20te%20Ri%20te%20Kosoves.pdf: http://www.masht-gov.net/advCms/documents/Korniza%20e%20Kurrikulit%20te%20Ri%20te%20Kosoves.pdf

[12] Ministry of Education, S. a. (2011, August 29). http://www.masht-gov.net. Retrieved February 09, 2015, from http://www.masht-gov.net/advCms/#id=1348: http://www.masht-gov.net/advCms/documents/Korniza%20e%20Kurrikules11.pdf

[13] Musai, B. (2003). "Metodologji e mësimdhënies" (Interpretime, modele praktike për mësimdhënie të suksesshme dhe nxënie produktive). Tiranë.

[14] Musai, B. (1999). "Psikologji Edukimi Zhvillimi, të nxënit, mësimdhënia". Tiranë.

[15] OECD. (2005). " Teaching Matters (attracting, developing and Retaining effective teachers)". OECD.

[16] Richards, J. C. (2006). Communicative Language Teaching Today. 32 Avenue of the Americas, New York,: © Cambridge University Press 2006.

[17] Savignon, S. J. (2006). Beyond communicative language teaching:What's ahead? Journal Of Pragmatics , 207-220.