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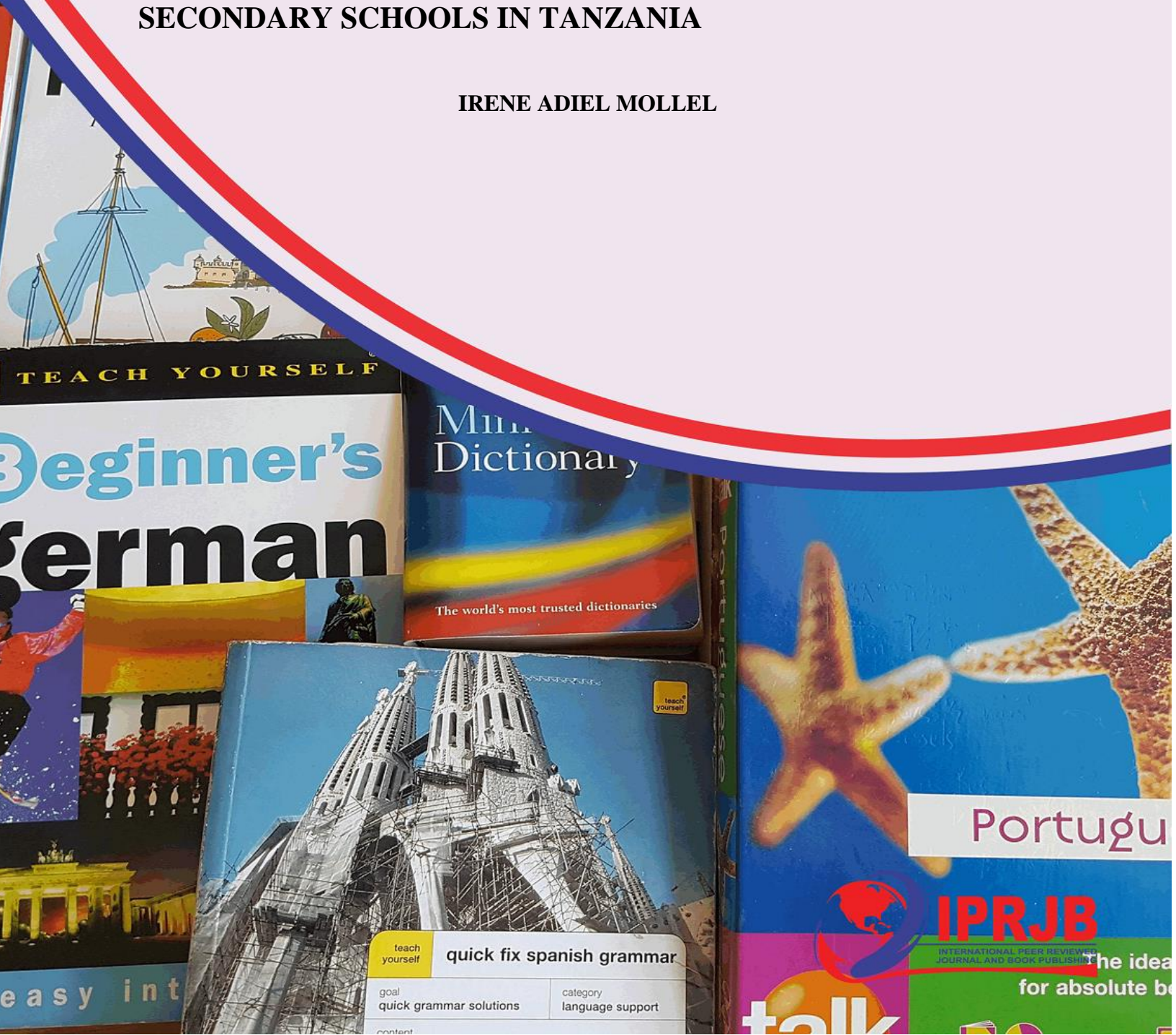IRENE ADIEL MOLLEL

HOW COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD ACTIVATE STUDENTS LEARNING PROCESSES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to make a thorough assessment of how communicative language teaching method activates student learning process in secondary schools in Tanzania, particularly Arusha district.

Methodology: This study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches under case study design and data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and thematic analysis.

Findings: Results from the study reveals that, CLT promotes learner's self-expression abilities using a target language; build learners communicative competences; Create and maintain the interaction between language, learner and the speaker and enhance easy assessment of the learners' practices and development.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: CLT method is the best approach to be adopted by all teachers on instructing learners' new language particularly the English language. The scrutiny of this study will help the policymakers to review the curriculum and add utmost CLT activities to be done in and outside the classroom thus enable students to get more time to practice the language.

Key words: *Language learning, communicative language teaching (CLT), language teaching, learning process*

INTRODUCTION

Language teaching has passed through many phases for the last fifty years. Richards (2005) mentions three phases through which language teaching has passed as a traditional approach up to the 1960s, classic communicative language teaching (1970s to 1990s) and current communicative language teaching (1990s to present). He emphasizes more that people learn a new language when they use it to do different things rather than by studying its functions. Therefore, English as (target language) is a tool for communication in the classroom and not just the object of study.

Galloway, (1993) states that CLT is an approach said to be used by educators who were not satisfied with traditional approaches. Such educators thought that learners did not know how to communicate using appropriate social language, gestures or expressions; instead, they believed that they required communicative competence more than linguistic competence. Further Islam (2016) explains that CLT caused a rethinking of approaches to designing and developing the syllabus and methodology. Despite designing new syllabus and textbooks to implement CLT, such a method fails to provide the desired outcomes in many countries in the exception of the Western countries. In many countries including Tanzania, some key elements of CLT do not be regarded; such elements include the principles of CLT, teacher student role and classroom activities.

Rahman et al., (2006) state that, those who have awareness of CLT fail to implement it in classroom teaching due to various reasons hence the absence of difference between the trained teachers and untrained ones. This failure is due to various reasons such as limited vocabulary to teachers and students, lack of real-life materials, lack of teaching aids, students' irregularity in attendance and inability to understand English, lack of English learning environment and improper setting arrangement.

According to (Ullah (2013), the Communicative language teaching method should cover the four skills namely, speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills. Regarding four language skills in Tanzania (speaking, listening, reading and writing) the effectiveness of CLT is weak simply because it fails to cover dimensions of speaking and listening skills; instead, it covers only writing and reading skills. This is easily seen during the examination setting where only two dimensions are covered which are reading and writing. Both Richards (2006) and Galloway (1993) state CLT as an approach of learning a foreign language in which language learners use a target language to do different things with less consideration on the function of such language. Therefore, they believe that learners require communicative competence rather than linguistic competence.

Islam (2016), Rahman et al (2006) and Ullah (2013) explain the failure of CLT on students' learning process as it fails to cover some dimensions of language skills, lack of teaching aids, lack of real-life materials, limited vocabulary to teachers, students' irregularity in attendance and inability to understand English. Therefore, the researcher worked on how to overcome the reasons for the failure of CLT and searching for the best way on how CLT works out to improve the learning process in secondary schools. Nowadays english language is recognized as the world communication facilitative language. Due to these different teaching methods have come into the current trend and then disappear. English language teaching has gone through a rapid change of

transitions in its methodology, from the grammar-translation method to direct method, to audio-lingual and other variations (Leung, 2005). One of these methods is the communicative language teaching method which is one of the methods to learn a foreign language. Historically, the communicative language teaching method (CLT) can be traced back to developments of linguistic theory and language learning curriculum design both in Europe and in North America during the 20th century (Savignon, 2002). Such a method then became adopted by the educationist in Cossovo and other European as well as North American countries.

Communicative Language Teaching has been accepted as a strong approach by many language educators due to the major focus on developing learner's ability to use the language appropriately in a different context. The communicative language teaching method is now considered as the best approach in English language learning as it enables learners to develop their communicative ability (Power, 2003).

Nunan (1991) emphasizes more on this approach. The author said; this approach has brought the most significant change into the practice of English language teaching hence, many educational and language institutions have adopted this approach in English language teaching. Generally, the author stated that the emergence of CLT signed the major change of the view of language philosophy from grammar rules to communication rules. He further said, other approaches of teaching English language were seen as error as students lost context while using the language.

Interestingly, Brown (2007) commented that CLT is an approach to language teaching methodology that emphasizes authenticity, interaction, student-centered learning, and task based activities and communication for the real world meaningful purpose. It is the method of learning a foreign language in which the focus is on meaningful communication and not structure, use not usage. This deals with the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence. In such a method students are given tasks to accomplish using a language instead of studying the language. Grounding from the discussion above, the researcher intended to explore the effectiveness of CLT method in secondary schools in Tanzania.

Study objectives

To identify the influence of the communicative language teaching method on students' learning process in secondary schools in Arusha district.

To investigate how the communicative language teaching method is used in secondary schools in Arusha district.

To explain strategies which communicative language teaching method can be applied enabling students learning process successfully in Arusha district

METHODOLOGY

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches variably during data collection and analysis respectively. A qualitative approach was chosen because it reduces unnecessary costs and enhances deeper understanding as it uses a small sample. The quantitative approach was also used because it was as an appropriate way of analyzing and presenting numerical and statistical data that were collected from the field.

In this study, the researcher decided to use a case study design because this design allowed the researcher to study the problem in greater depth. The researcher decided to conduct the study in Arusha district because it is one of the regions in which the Communicative Language Teaching method is pioneered to be used in language teaching and learning.

In this study, the targeted population involved English language teachers and secondary school students from two chosen schools. The researcher selected a sample of six language teachers and twenty-four students from all schools. The researcher used purposive sampling to select both teachers and students as they were the one having the required information, that is, they dealt with English language directly.

In this study, questionnaires and interviews were used to collect primary data while secondary data were collected from various documents, journals, books, the internet, websites, reports and other written materials. Students were given questionnaires and semi structured interview was applied to teachers because this method allowed the immediate response and changes of questions for more information. The close ended questions in this study were checked, organized and break data into manageable units, and synthesized to make meaningful patterns and finally, data edited and coded. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS data analysis while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The researcher also adhered to all research ethical issues. Tools which were used for analysis of quantitative data were numerical and figures and tables were used to present data.

RESULTS

The influences of CLT Methods to Secondary School Students' Learning Process

This constituted the first objective of this study in which the researcher aimed to investigate how CLT method influences language teaching and learning to secondary school students in Arusha district. In accomplishing this objective, the researcher's concentration was on the investigation of the respondents' awareness on the CLT methods and the level of application of CLT method in secondary schools. Using questionnaires and interview methods of data collection the researcher consulted 24 students and 6 teachers which is equal to (80%) and (20%) respectively in which 54% of respondents were aware of the CLT method and agreed that there is a direct influence of the CLT method on language learning while 46% disagreed.
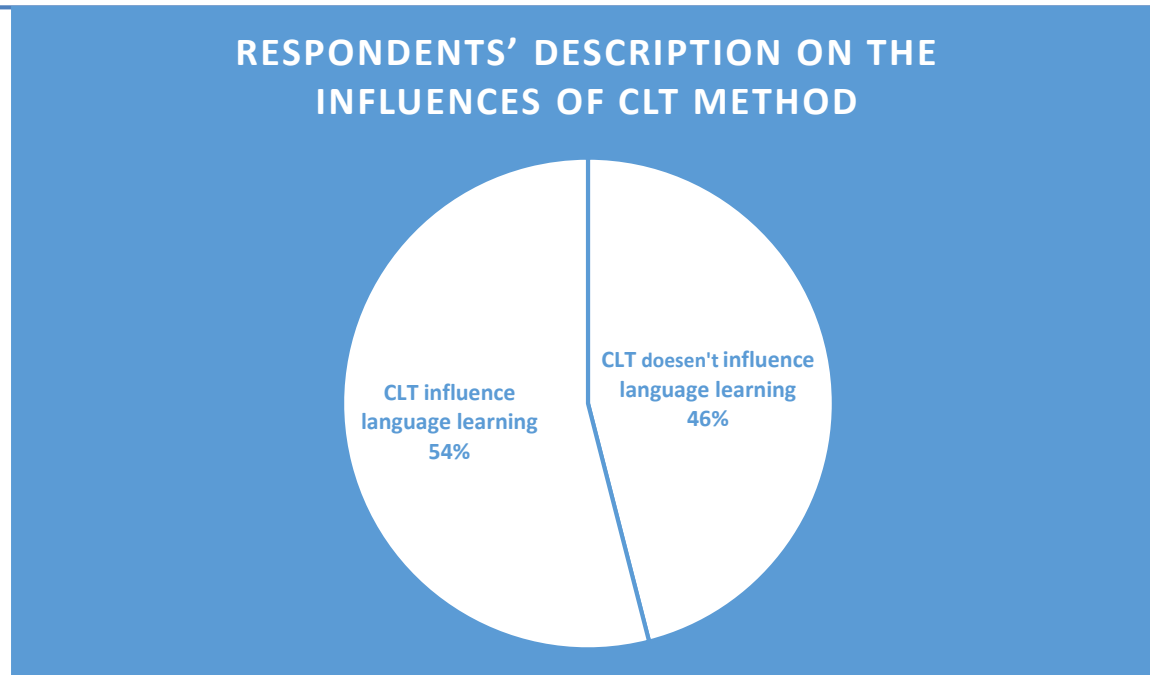
Figure 1: Respondents' Description on the Influences of CLT Method

In responding to this aspect 54% of the respondents commented on the influences of the CLT method in language learning. They said; CLT method promotes learner's self-expression ability in using the targeted language, Build learners' communicative competences, Create and maintain the interaction between language, learner and the speaker; the method give learners a room to frequently interact with a targeted language, the method enhances easy assessment of the learners' practices and development due to the fact that learners and facilitators can assess themselves easily since this method of learning allow the learner to receive instructions, respond communicatively and present their findings freely hence the supervisor can assess the learners' development. The 46% had no reason to support their stand. The researcher's findings are in line with Brown (2007) and (Moss & Ross- Feldman, 2003) who assert CLT as an approach to language teaching and learning which emphasizes interaction, authenticity, student-centered learning, task-based activities and communication for the real world meaningful purpose.

The researcher went deep, sought to know the extent to which CLT method is used in secondary schools. Respondents had this to say;

CLT method is most of time applied in the process of teaching and learning. We provide students with pair work, group work, role play and discussion. We also allow the trial and error atmosphere.

This is supported by Richards (2005) who concluded that, people learn a new language when they use it to do different things rather than studying its functions. This implies that the English language should be used as a tool of communication in the classroom and not just the object of study to improve student's activeness, confidence, and grammar in the whole process of teaching and learning.

How Communicative Language Teaching Method is used in secondary schools

How communicative language teaching method is used in secondary schools was the second objective of the study. In accomplishing this objective the researcher involved 30 respondents in which 80% of them were students and 20% were teachers. The researcher set out questionnaires and interview questions in which all respondents were obliged to fill and respond to those tasks. In accomplishing this task the researcher grouped language learning practices into two categories which are indoor and outdoor language learning practices.

In-Door Language Learning Practices

The in-door learning practices are all learning activities taking place during learning inside the classroom including lectures, group discussions, demonstrations and other learning activities. In seeking how in-door language learning process run in the researched schools the researcher prepared a set of a questionnaire asking what teachers and students do in the process of teaching and learning English language. The researcher listed various in-door (CLT) learning activities and respondents chose the activities they do in the teaching and learning process. Their responses are summarized by the researcher as follows;
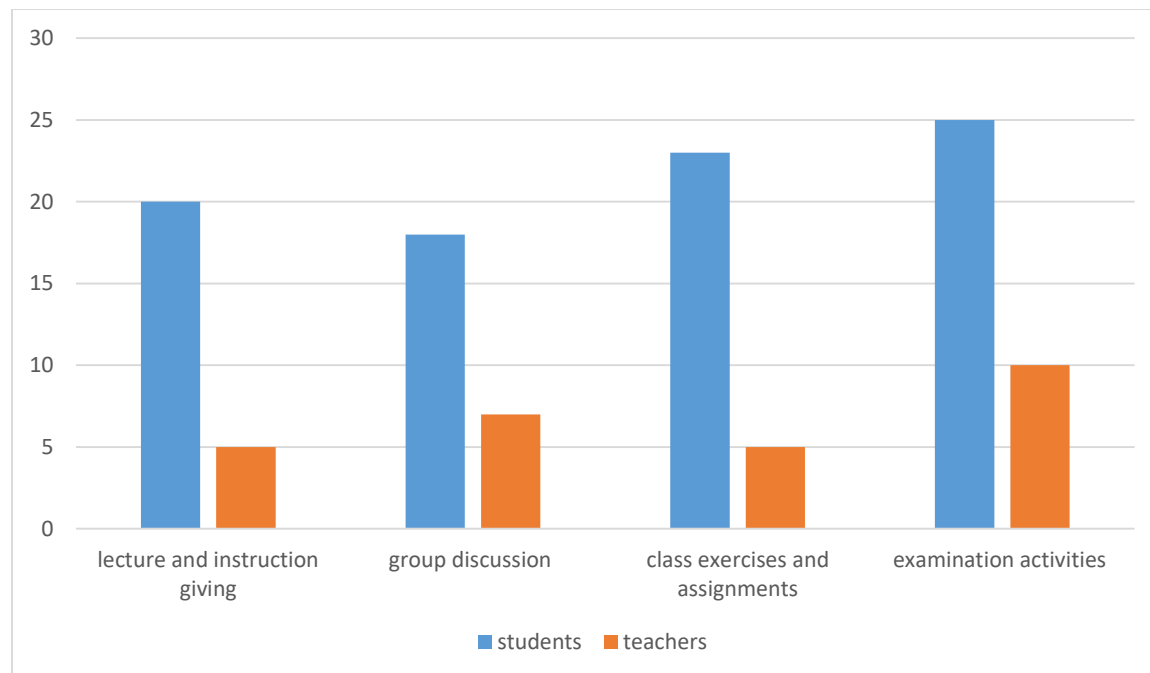

Figure 2: The In-Door Language Learning Activities

Figure 2 above revealed that CLT method is applicable in secondary schools since some of the CLT method activities are done in the class room by both teachers and students. .

The Outdoor English Language Learning Activities

The researcher wanted to know how outdoor activities take place and responses were as follows;

Frequent Debate Programs

In all researched schools respondents presented debates as the best outdoor practices which they use in enabling learners to learn the English language. These debates include in school debates and off campus debates (competing with neighboring schools). The debate schedules in the researched schools are as follows;

Table 1

Debate Schedule in the Researched School

Schools	In-school debates	Out-school competition debate
School A	Every Friday 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Twice per term
School B	Every Thursday 1:10 PM - 2:30 PM	Thrice annually

Note: In school A out school competition debate is practiced four times yearly, that is twice each term while school B they practice three times in a year.

Formulating English Clubs

Like other subjects, English language teachers formulate student clubs in which students of different classes interact with other English language experts do discuss different issues concerning the language under the study. Individual learners arise their learning challenges and other club participants help them to solve such challenges. In the two researched schools, the researcher discovered that these clubs meet once per week and the activities which take place when they meet are; experience sharing, telling stories, narrating poems, writing essays, reading novels, and acting plays which all are conducted in English language. The findings are in line with researcher's explored literature, Ullah (2013), Richards (2005) and Galloway (1993) as they assert that communicative language teaching method should cover the four skills namely, speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills. These scholars express more that language learners should use a target language to do different things with less consideration on the function of such language. Therefore, they believe that learners require communicative competence rather than linguistic competence.

CLT in Enabling Successful Learning Process among Secondary School Students

The researcher's objectives were fulfilled by gathering the respondents' suggestions on how the CLT method can be applied to ensure successfulness in English language learning in secondary schools. 28 out of 30 respondents (93.3%) pointed out their suggestions on how CLT can be applied in enabling successful learning processes among secondary school students. They had this to say; Teachers should be facilitators rather than instructors, Initiation of Training and Seminars, Creation of Favorable Learning Environment, Increasing Participation in Supervising English language learning Programs, Establishing More English Speaking and Learning Programs and Providing Motivation and Rewards to Teachers and Learners. The remaining 2 respondents (6.6%) had nothing to say.

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DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the CLT method is to enable learners to perform a lot of learning activities using the targeted language. Many teachers fail to accomplish this demand since they prefer to instruct students rather than facilitating them to perform their learning practices for themselves. The findings are in line with researcher's explored literature Islam (2016) who explains that, despite designing new syllabus and textbooks to implement CLT, such a method fails to provide the desired outcomes in many countries in the exception of the Western countries. In many countries including Tanzania, some key elements of CLT do not be regarded; such elements include the principles of CLT, teacher student role and classroom activities. This implies that, teachers should use more of learner-centered approach than teacher-centered approach.

More training and seminars should be provided to in service teachers. This is because some of English language teachers in our secondary schools have partial understanding of the CLT method and they are unaware on their roles and students roles.

For anything to be successful, conducive environment is vital. This is to say learning environment should be supportive for students to learn and practices in and out of the school campus; for the school environment supports this, home environment should also be emphasized to enable learners use the targeted language instead of their mother tongue language. Rahman et al., (2006) state that, those who have awareness of CLT fail to implement it in classroom teaching due to various reasons hence the absence of difference between the trained teachers and untrained ones. This failure is due to various reasons such as limited vocabulary to teachers and students, lack of real-life materials, lack of teaching aids, students' irregularity in attendance and inability to understand English, lack of English learning environment and improper setting arrangement. This infers that, apart from teachers and students know their activities, conducive environment is also very important for the accomplishment of what is desired in the curriculum.

In the process of teaching and learning English language, all teachers should be part of it. Most of times content teachers felt the issue of teaching English language is for English subject teachers only, but as far as they all use it in their subjects (except Kiswahili subject) they are also language teachers in one way or the other. The researcher quoted one of the respondents lamenting,

"*It is difficult for Science and Mathematics teachers to be part of the supervision of English language learning, as this is the problem among the teachers themselves*".

Richard (2005) supports the findings by emphasizing that; English as (target language) is a tool for communication in the classroom and not just the object of study. This implies that, content teachers are also part of English language teaching not as they assume this to be the work of English language teachers only.

More speaking programs should be established and maintained in secondary schools to facilitate English language learning process. Respondents suggested that some programs such as debate and morning speech by students should be made mandatory in secondary schools. Similarly, Ullah (2013), state that, the Communicative language teaching method should cover the four skills namely, speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Regarding four language skills in Tanzania (speaking, listening, reading and writing) the effectiveness of CLT is weak simply

because it fails to cover dimensions of speaking and listening skills; instead, it covers only writing and reading skills. This is easily seen during the examination setting where only two dimensions are covered which are reading and writing.

When Teachers and Learners are motivated and rewarded, it will awaken the inspiration of learning English language. The suggested rewards include visiting national parks and monetary and material motivations among others.

CONCLUSION

CLT method is the best approach to be adopted by all teachers on instructing learners' on learning new language specifically English language. Various CLT methods were adopted in Tanzania and these include both indoor and outdoor activities such as subject clubs, debate and communication practice using English language as the medium of instruction. Although 47% of all respondents include teachers and students were not aware of this language teaching method, the level of application of the CLT method in learning and teaching English language seemed to be high as all activities concern English language learning and other forms of communication around school campuses run using English language. The following recommendations were made from the findings. First, the policy makers should review the curriculum and add utmost CLT activities to be done in and outside the classroom so as students will get more time to practice the language. Second the school management should provide seminars to teachers making them aware on the method and all the activities hence easiness for them to deliver to students and make the whole process of teaching and learning English language tranquil.

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