



RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACHES AND LEARNERS SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH IN PUBLIC DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RWANDA A CASE OF KAYONZA DISTRICT

Muhayimana Adrien¹ and Dr. Hesbon Opiyo Andala PhD²

1. MED Student, School Of Education, Mount Kenya University, Rwanda.
2. Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Mount Kenya University, Rwanda.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 31 May 2024

Final Accepted: 30 June 2024

Published: July 2024

Abstract

The need for English has increased demand for high-quality language instruction globally. Despite the efforts that have been made to improve proficiency and oral communication skills in English, oral English communication abilities are still critical among the learners in public day secondary schools in Rwanda. This study aimed at determining the relationship between communicative language teaching approaches and learners' English oral communication skills acquired in public day secondary schools in Rwanda. This study used descriptive survey design and correlational design to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. 408 people were the target group, including teachers, learners from public day secondary schools, head teachers, and deputy head teachers in charge of studies. The study picked a sample of 202 people from the target demographic using basic random sampling techniques and purposive sampling. IBM SPSS version 21 was used to analyze the data that were gathered from the respondents through the use of questionnaires and interview guides. Using statistical tools like means, percentages, standard deviations, correlation coefficients, and beta coefficients as regression models, this software arranged and summarized the data to guarantee the accuracy and evidence of all findings. The findings were presented in tables and charts. The Alpha Cronbach value was 0.755 which indicated the reliability of instruments and the experts' opinions were incorporated to ascertain the instruments' validity. The findings indicated that 88% of the respondents confirmed a strong positive influence of CLT on learners' speaking skills. The mean for all variables were approximately 4 with standard deviation less than 1. The significant correlation with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the usual significance level of 0.05 and this indicates a very strong positive relationship between CLT and Learners' speaking skills. The study concluded that there is positive significant effect of communicative language teaching approaches; task-based, project based, collaboration, group discussion, debate and role play approaches on Learners' speaking skills in English in public day secondary schools. The study recommended learners, school administrators, teachers and policymakers on what should be done to improve speaking skills in English and further studies area were given.

Introduction:-

Worldwide, English is the major language for communication and is an international language (Rose et al., 2021). Because English is essential for social, political, and academic communication as well as for graduates to be prepared for the workforce, it is employed in a variety of sectors (Chan, 2021; Lekpetch & Foley, 2022). English is therefore widely used and accessible. Speaking and writing English well has become essential to the success of the younger generation and to keep them informed in day-to-day affairs. Since English has grown in importance among Thai people, individuals who study and use it well will have greater prospects than those who are unable to communicate in the language. The learning system has been modified to make it more appropriate for and consistent with current technologies due to the requirement of English. Two of the most important disciplines and curricula in contemporary educational settings globally are language instruction and learning. Over the years, a wide range of teaching and learning theories and practices have been developed to meet the demands of diverse student backgrounds, target languages, and geographical locations. Nonetheless, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is among the most important and practical teaching and learning concepts in the field of contemporary language instruction.

East African countries are included in the outer ring since English is spoken as a second language. At all educational levels, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan use English as the medium of teaching. (Xu, 2017). The most recent approaches; Grammar Translation, Audio-Lingual Method, and Direct Method, tend to drill learners and have them perform speech acts while concentrating more on the language's structure. Even though they are still in use, these approaches have previously been deemed insufficient since they do not foster the freedom and fluency needed for spontaneous discussions. They prioritized grammatical competence as the foundation of language competency because they believe that language may be learnt through habit formation.

Over the years, efforts to improve English language teaching (ELT) have yielded in many beneficial methods that can be applied in various language teaching contexts. However, in order to meet the objectives of language learning, many of these methods have been criticized and refined. As a result, learning expectations should be related to the issues that are important to the learners (Nugraha & Suherdi, 2017).

The English language instruction methodology known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) places a strong emphasis on interaction. CLT makes use of the interaction as the primary learning goal and focal point of the class (Waheed, 2018). This suggests that in order to facilitate engagement, the instructor should create activities for the English language class that would stimulate the students' oral proficiency. They may do it in groups or with their peers. The major goal is to provide a classroom setting where students are actively given chances to speak and utilize English. Positioning the learner's capacity appropriately can be achieved through the use of a communicative language teaching strategy. Without a doubt, CLT methods enhance students' abilities. Every time a learner uses the target language, CLT helps them become more confident. With this method, students can participate in class activities based on their prior knowledge and experiences (Lumy, 2018).

Along with French and Kinyarwanda, English is an official language in Rwanda. From pre-primary to university, it is taught in schools as a subject. Starting in primary four, it is also used as an instructional medium. Not only is English taught in schools, but it's also used in Rwanda for both private and public communication. It is the official language of communication for a number of organizations, including the Common Wealth and East African Community member nations. According to Sibomana (2014), this circumstance reveals that a significant portion of Rwandans are able to speak English because it is widely utilized in daily communication in the country.

English has been substituted for the previous language of teaching as a medium of instruction for more than ten years, in addition to being taught as a subject in schools since the 1960s (Sibomana, 2010). Despite numerous attempts to improve its usage and acquisition in Rwanda, many educated inhabitants of the country are still deemed to be lacking in English proficiency (Sibomana, 2010; Kagwesage, 2012; Pearson, 2013; Uwubuntu, 2013). As a result, Rwandans hardly ever use English in casual conversations.

Problem Statement

These days, a lot of learners study English, but their attention is primarily on linguistic forms or grammar. When given the opportunity to communicate in English, they are non-communicative. They may write well, but they struggle with speaking. Ismail, I. (2019). Though they are unable to speak English, they may understand it when others do. Communicating verbally and in writing are the two main objectives of language acquisition Samad, I., & Ismail, I. (2019).

English is used as medium of communication world-wide and medium of instruction in teaching-Learning process. Sibomana, (2010); Kagwesage (2012); Pearson (2013); Uwubuntu (2013), from their published research, have declared how educated people in Rwanda still want to learn more to improve English oral communication skills due to its role in communication, and as is used as medium of instruction to replace former instructional language (French) and taught as subject since 1960s. A lot of efforts have been made to enhance the acquisition of English. Also, Rosendal (2010), pointed out that the proficiency in English language that is learnt in formal setting is poor in Rwanda. Sibomana (2010); Williams (2011); USAID (2012) through their research, have shown that the ability to read in English is relatively low for primary, secondary and university students.

The inadequate proficiency in English among the educated citizens in Rwanda, It appears that there has been some ineffectiveness in the methods utilized to teach English (Sibomana, 2014). Given that English is now a universal language of communication, it follows that conventional approaches to teaching the language do not always align with English's current state (Jindapitak & Teo, 2013, p. 191). Furthermore, English instruction in Rwanda has been hampered by attempts to implement the English as a medium of instruction policy, as demonstrated by Sibomana (2015).

Teachers of English are highly required to apply CLT and use different activities in their Classroom (Anser, 2011). As a result, learners are not able to communicate properly. Therefore, there is a demand to conduct a study focusing on adequate approaches; these have to be used with the emphasis on learners' oral communication skills acquisition. This is Communicative Language Teaching approaches and Learners' Speaking skills in English in Public Day Secondary Schools in Rwanda. A case of Kayonza district. This is the research gap from other studies and it requires research in the context of Rwanda.

Literature Review:-

There is a right way to learn a lingua franca. Language instruction using communicative methods has proven to be effective in both teaching and learning. According to Haryani and Ainur (2020), the CLT method enables students to speak English more fluently. It encourages communication and is the approach that EFL teachers around the world recommend most.

The term "accuracy" describes the proper use of grammar in language. It entails speaking and writing in the language (Rishi, 2014). Sheppard (2015) continues, "Accuracy is centered on using appropriate vocabulary and grammar to clearly convey meaning."

According to Brown (2021) consensus, effective oral communication is a component of speaking ability. Because learners must produce something while learning to utilize language, it is known as a productive skill. "Speaking is an activity that involves two or more people in which the participants are both listeners and speakers having to act what they listen to and make contribution meaningfully". Speaking abilities, also referred to as rhetoric, is the art of speaking that a person might acquire with the goal of effectively communicating verbally to others. Speaking is the act of utilizing spoken language to communicate one's intentions (thoughts, ideas, and innermost feelings) to another person in a way that allows others to understand you.

Speaking requires taking into account fluency, or the capacity to utilize the language naturally and fluidly while writing or speaking. A proficient speaker can talk at a natural pace, avoid taking unneeded pauses, and keep the conversation flowing naturally (Rishi, 2014).

Speaking abilities are unquestionably a component of communicative competence. Hymes established the concept in the CLT approach in the early 1970s, as Farooq (2015) said. He held that a speaker was considered communicatively competent if they possessed both language knowledge and proficiency. Furthermore, according to Richards and Platt (quoted in Farooq, 2015), CLT improves the development of Communicative Competence.

According to Nugraha & Suherdi (2017), English Language Teaching (ELT) has evolved over time to enhance learners' learning outcomes. The development of practical techniques applicable to a range of English teaching contexts has resulted from the substantial improvement of English standards. A number of English language teaching strategies have been refined and tested in order to meet the learning objective. It is imperative to bear in mind that the learning objectives should be linked to topics that hold significance for the students. However, great consideration has gone into how those approaches are currently being used, accounting for important factors that have an indirect impact on the learner. The methods that have been updated or changed over time have consistently been a weak point with little bearing on educators and learners.

According to Waheed (2018). The English language instruction methodology known as Communicative Language instruction (CLT) places a strong emphasis on interaction. CLT makes use of the interaction as the primary learning tool and goal of the class. This means that in order to facilitate contact, the instructor of English should design an activity that will stimulate the students' speech proficiency. They may do it in groups or with their peers. The major goal is to establish a setting in which students are encouraged to speak English. Communicative language teaching is an appropriate approach to place the learner's skill in the appropriate context.

According to Ahmed (2016) and Sherwani & Kilic (2017) as well as Albahri, Yang, & Moustakim (2018), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach used in the teaching of foreign and second languages that enables effective interaction and communication among learners. It is best described as a collection of guidelines about the goals of language instruction through various classroom activities that successfully encourage language acquisition through communication (Athawadi, 2019; Roy, 2016). By including aspects of authentic communication in natural environments, it engages students in conversation and supports their individual language proficiency growth. Rather than stressing grammatical accuracy, it concentrates on meaningful communication (Islam, 2016; Richards & Rogers, 2014). According to Ismail, I., & Tini, T. (2020), CLT is viewed as a technique that can motivate students to use English to communicate with others in authentic situations. The teaching procedures are set up to support the students in using the target language. Because the primary goal of CLT is to assist students in achieving communicative competence, students are taught to use the language in real-world situations rather than rehearsing grammar rules or studying language mechanics.

Classroom Activities used in Communicative Language Teaching

The CLT class needs a variety of activities. "Activities can be enjoyable, meaningful, interactive, and regularly used to build and maintain a communicative culture in the classroom," claims Courtney (2020 p.21). He presents a number of activities tailored to Vietnamese contexts, including "Draw a dream house," which "encourages group work and builds rapport," "I'm not just a number," which concentrates on the classroom environment and the word order in questions, "Paragraph Pass," a writing exercise that allows students to add sentences while emphasizing idea meaning and grammar structure, and "Market Place," which allows students to participate in group discussions. In his piece, he offers extremely thorough, step-by-step instructions that list all the materials needed, the reasoning for each exercise, and the responsibilities for each one.

Furthermore, Teachers can design CLT for reading that combines speaking and hearing about a particular circumstance, CLT for writing that adds ideas to a topic, and CLT for reading that is similar to jigsaw puzzles or gap information. CLT can be used to teach and acquire any ability, not only speaking. Grammar can be implicitly taught using other abilities. In fact, a wide range of instructional techniques and materials can be employed in conjunction with the CLT approach, such as problem-based learning (Da Silva Cintra & Bittencourt, 2015), role-playing (Tweedie & Johnson, 2018), group sharing (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015), and discussion (Dos Santos, 2017b).

Principles of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Helping student's foster communicative competence, defined as the "ability to interpret and enact appropriate social behaviors, and it requires the learner to be actively involved in the production of the target language." is the primary goal of CLT. It also calls for competence in discourse (starting, joining, maintaining, and finishing conversations), sociolinguistics (saying the proper thing in social contexts), language (including syntax and vocabulary), and strategy (resolving communication problems and speaking successfully).

The shared characteristic of CLT approaches is that they are built around problem-solving and information-sharing activities, communication exercises including "real-world" scenarios, and consideration of the learner's

requirements, objectives, and background. Principles that can serve as a roadmap for putting CLT into practice are defined by Courtney (2020).

Communicative Competence Theory

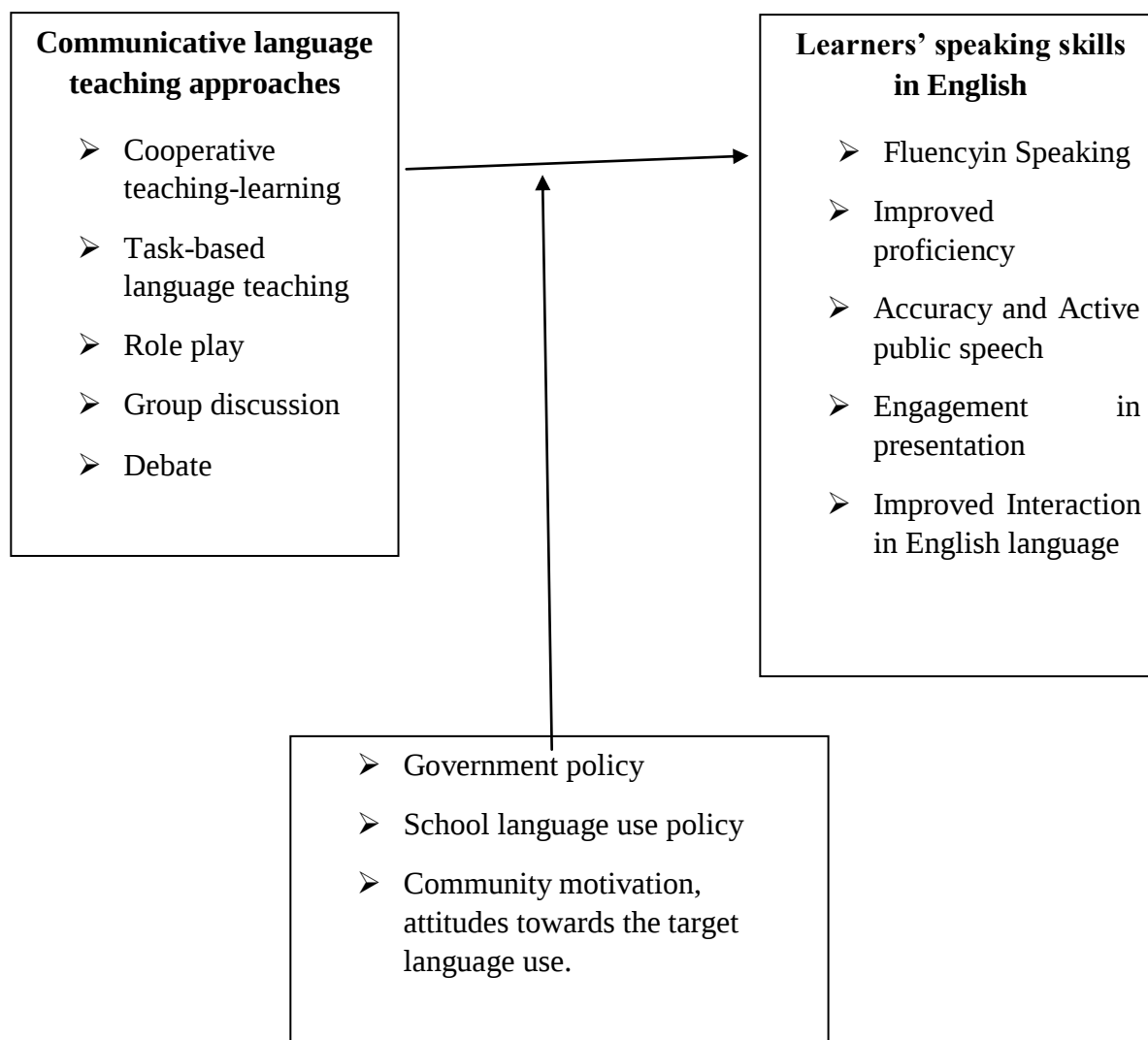
Rahman (2018) cites Chomsky to explain that competence in a language is defined as having the fundamental understanding of the grammatical system, which enables a user to create and understand an infinite number of sentences given a restricted set of rules, as opposed to performance in a language, which is defined as using the basic knowledge to communicate (Newby, 2011). Hymes, on the other hand, disagreed with the idea of ignoring the social aspects of language. He comes to the conclusion that because Chomsky's theory of performance excludes socio-cultural factors and unequal competence in a heterogeneous speech community, it is an inadequate portrayal of competence. This is the capacity to communicate in a context by using internalized language grammar principles.

Drawing on Hymes' communicative competency theory, Widdowson (1978) established the notion of what is now known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2017). According to Widdowson, learning a language means more than just being aware of grammar rules; it also entails becoming proficient in the language and being able to communicate effectively. In Rahman (2018). CLT is a well-known approach to language instruction that developed from the socio-cognitive underpinnings of socio-linguistic theory.

Conceptual Framework

Independent variable

Dependent variable



Research Methodology:-

The descriptive survey approach were used for this study because it allows variables or the observable condition of a phenomenon to be described. It also facilitates the process of drawing conclusions on the behavior of a particular occurrence or the relationship between variables. Using this methodology, the study described the effect of Communicative Language Teaching methods on English language learners' speaking skills in secondary schools in Rwanda. In order to determine the relationship between learners' English-speaking abilities and the communicative language teaching methodologies utilized in Rwanda's public day secondary schools, the study also employed a correlational survey design.

Population is defined by Mugenda and Mugenda (2017) as all the subjects for whom the researcher hopes to generalize the study results. The target population of this study comprised of head teachers, Deputy Head teachers in charge of studies, Teachers of English and Learners from Public day secondary schools located in Kayonza district. This study focused on twelve (12) schools. Thus, one school in each sector. The target population were four hundred and eight (408).

To make inferences about the target population as a whole, a researcher investigates a sample, which is a subset of the target population (Creswell, 2012). The Yamane formula were used by the researcher to determine sample size (Yamane, 2015). The sample size were 202 from a population of 408 using the Yamane formula.

Simple random sampling method were used to select respondents and collect data from the head-teachers, learners and deputy head teachers. The researcher utilized the purposive sampling technique to choose among the teachers. All responses were chosen based on their knowledge of English Teaching approaches and experience.

The instruments enable steady data collection, guaranteeing that the data gathered is accurate and truly representative of the population (Byiringiro, 2023). Data for this study were gathered through a combination of interview and questionnaire techniques. Teachers and students were asked to complete mixed-method questionnaires, which combine open-ended and closed-ended questions. Since questionnaires are quick and simple for respondents to understand, they are an efficient way to gather data while also saving time. Furthermore, surveys are an efficient way to gather a lot of data quickly. In order to get information from Headteachers and Deputy Head teachers overseeing studies, the researcher also employed interview guides. Each school's head teacher and deputy head teacher had a one-on-one conversation about this. The interview method of data collecting is crucial since it yields more information about the study region, enhancing the precision of the recommendations and conclusions.

After the researcher had collected adequate data to meet sampling requirements, the researcher assigned codes, as well as, summarized and analyzed data using SPSS factor analysis. All data gathered were analyzed using IBM SPSS 21 statistical packages for social sciences. The creation of descriptive statistics, primarily frequencies and percentages, means, and standard deviations, pertaining to the study variables communicative language teaching methodologies and learners' English-speaking skills in public day secondary schools in Rwanda, as well as a demographic synopsis were made possible by this. Furthermore, to determine the impact of Communicative Language Teaching Approaches on Learners' English speaking skills in Public Day Secondary Schools in Rwanda, inferential statistics were generated, primarily Pearson correlation coefficient, T-test coefficients, p values, and regression coefficients.

Research Findings Interpretation and Discussion:-

The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between Language teaching approaches used and learners' oral communication skills acquired in English in public day secondary schools in Kayonza district Rwanda. Having identified the Communicative Language teaching approaches used, having assessed oral communication skills acquired in English among learners in public day secondary schools; the researcher went through the relationship between the Language Teaching approaches and the influence these have on Learners' oral communication skills, the descriptive statistics findings are presented in the table below.

Table 1:- Relationship between English Language Teaching Approaches and Learners' Speaking Skills.

Statements		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cooperative-learning has improved our fluency and interaction in English language.		0.5%	12.4%		58.4%	28.7%	4.02	0.911
Role play has engaged us into acquisition of presentation skills.			9.4%	0.5%	61.9%	28.2%	4.09	0.812
Task based and Project-based approaches have engaged us in presentation and public speech skills.			9.9%		65.8%	24.3%	4.04	0.800
Debate has improved our interaction in English skills.			16.3%	0.5%	56.9%	26.2%	3.93	0.959
Group discussion has improved our listening skills, and interaction in English language.			10.4%		62.9%	26.7%	4.06	0.826

Source: Primary Data 2024

The findings related to the relationship between English Language teaching approaches and learners' oral communication skills acquired presented in the above Table 4.5 indicate that 90.1% of the respondents agreed that role play, task-based and project-based approaches have influence on presentation and public speech skills while 9.9% disagreed. Secondly, 89.6% of the respondents accepted that group discussion had effect on Learners' speaking skills, being listening skills and 10.4% rejected this. This was followed by 87.1% of the respondents did agree that collaborative approach had effect on fluency skills among learners contrary to this 12.9% declined the acceptance. Lastly, 83.1% of the respondents confirmed the influence of debate on learners' oral communication skills opposing 16.9% who disagreed with the indicator. The findings presented the agreement of 88% of the respondents about the influence of Communicative language teaching approaches on learners' speaking skills in public day secondary schools in Kayonza district Rwanda, and 12% of the respondents disagreed to the indicators. The mean for all indicators is equivalent to 4 and standard deviation which is approximate to 1 which indicate that most of the respondents agreed that CLT approaches used in teaching English have effect on Learners' speaking skills in English in public day secondary schools of Kayonza district Rwanda.

The researcher had an open interview with the head teachers and deputy head teachers in charge of studies among 12 selected schools, and from the interview, they mostly indicated that Language teaching approaches used in teaching English help learners to improve their speaking skills through presentation, group discussion, debate, task-based approaches learners improve their oral and written communication in English because they become more engaged and interactive, thus communicative in the target language.

The findings reflect the one of Perawati, (2021) in Japan who found that this is because students are not participating in their education in a way that supports attaining the intended outcomes, nor are they involved in learning how to work cooperatively with one another. When they are studying in class, they are typically quieter. When English language learners attempt project-based assignments through discussion methods, they can work together to address their learning challenges. To increase students' confidence and fluency in English, they must cooperate with one another and aid one another in understanding the course material. Teaching English involves more than just trying to get students to memorize a variety of rules, definitions, and procedures—it also involves getting students to work together as active participants in the teaching and learning process within the classroom.

Conclusion:-

The study concluded that there is a positive significant relationship between Communicative language teaching approaches and Learners' speaking skills in English. The 88% of the respondents about the influence of Communicative language teaching approaches on learners' speaking skills confirmed the effect of CLT on learners' oral communication skills. The mean for all indicators is equivalent to 4 and standard deviation which is approximate to 1 which indicate that most of the respondents agreed that CLT approaches used in teaching English have effect on Learners' speaking skills in English in public day secondary schools of Kayonza district Rwanda. Whenever communicative language teaching approaches, task-based, project-based, cooperative, collaborative, role play, group discussion and debate approaches are used in classroom setting while teaching-learning English they highly improve learners' fluency, listening, presentation, public speech and interaction in English that result into linguistic competencies and communicative competence being performance in English language in public day secondary schools in Kayonza district Rwanda.

Recommendations:-

The study recommends learners to become active and engage in classroom activities that trigger their speaking skills that result in interaction and improve their oral communication skills rather than internalizing grammar rules on the purpose of getting marks.

The study also recommends Teachers of English to adjust their teaching approaches to communicative language teaching to raise learners' fluency and proficiency in English. The activities must reflect rich inputs of the language that have positive language output being communicative competence.

Moreover, this study recommends head teachers, deputy head teachers and academic staff as well should incorporate debate, public speech and school presentation in the school policy on language use for communication purpose. They should also organize and plan for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to train in service teachers for CLT approaches in teaching-learning English for communicative purpose and revise language policy in their respective schools.

Lastly, the study recommends Curriculum designers and Policymakers due to their role in education; they should review existing approaches to teaching English and re-design approaches that meet English language demand in today's era. The new appropriate materials and syllabus to overcome barriers to English oral communication skills acquired by learners in public day secondary schools should be developed.

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