Applying the Communicative Approach in Teaching English Language: Impediments and challenges, Taza and Taounante Regions as Case Studies

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Abstract:

The present study is an attempt to investigate the impediments that stand against implementing the communicative approach among high school students. The study focuses on 2nd year baccalaureate students: their prospective year of graduation, taking two regions as case studies Taza and Taounante cities. This paper tends to tackle the approaches that English language teachers tend to apply, the reasons that prevent English language teachers from implementing the Communicative Language Approach (CLA) and the measures that can be applied to enable teachers so as to execute the CLA. The review of literature is inclusive and refers to English theories that first introduced the communicative approach to learning. The field work is conducted through distributing a representative number of questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were distributed for both second baccalaureate students and English teachers and conducted interviews with them. This research paper argues that overcrowded classes, time constraints, lack of appropriate materials and the students’ low level of English are the main reasons that make English teachers abstain from implementing the CLA. Additionally, based on the findings, the study argues that having limited number of students, maintaining in-service trainings for the teachers and the availability of appropriate materials are the measures that should be met to implement the communicative approach in teaching.

Keywords: communicative approach, impediments, second year baccalaureate students, Taza and Taounante Regions.

Introduction:

Communicative approach to teaching is considered an effective method which helps teachers facilitate the teaching- learning process and equip students with communicative skills. This, in turn, cultivates student’s speaking competences through merely communicative authentic activities such as: conversation, role play, pair and group work, etc. Due to the fast-paced changing world, the communicative approach is introduced to replace the classical methods in teaching and learning which no longer meet the learners’ needs (Mate, 2016). Historically speaking, English was introduced as a purely functional tool for economic
purposes like international banking and tourism in Morocco during the French protectorate (Hyde, 1994). Therefore, Morocco has been looking for reforming its educational system since independence, and the focus was on teaching English while incorporating the communicative approach. This was the primary concern of the national charter for education and training of 1999. The goal of this incorporation is to keep up with the rapidly-changing world to make the learner the center of the teaching-learning process, focusing on fluency rather than accuracy. Moreover, this came as a reaction to the failure that the Moroccan public school had witnessed due to the traditional approaches that it had been using before (Mate, 2016).

In a teaching environment where the communicative approach is implemented by professionally well-informed teachers, students could be easily engaged in the classroom activities and their speaking abilities are highly noticeable. However, in non-communicatively oriented classrooms, teachers find it difficult to get their students deeply absorbed in activities and materials destined to simplify their learning. Besides, teachers cannot ensure better, if no communicative engagement is taken. This may reduce the students’ speaking time and may even get them quit the lesson. However, nowadays communicative language approach is not successfully implemented in the classroom because of multiple challenges across the country. The same applies to Taza and Taounante Regions because teachers do not opt for using the CLA as they had been required in in-service training in their training centers. There is a dire need to investigate why English teachers do not apply it. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that teachers do not apply the communicative language approach to teaching English language because of the large classes they teach, they are not acquainted with the CLA necessary skills and the time preparation the CLA requires. The research questions that this study attempts to address are the following:

What are the approaches that English language teachers are more likely to apply? What are the reasons that prevent English language teachers from implementing the CLA?

What are the measures that can be applied to enable teachers execute the CLA?

Being aware of the lack of implementation of CLA in these regions, this study aims at investigating the reasons that prevent teachers of English from using it and poses alternative methods that they are more likely to use. It also endeavors to offer measures to facilitate the use of CLA. Since the study is concerned with the application of the CLA in these regions, interviews and questionnaires are conducted with both teachers and students from these areas. The rationale behind the sample is to generate different views concerning the use of CLA inside the classroom and the causes that impede its implementation and to have a clear view from the perspective of the teachers and students as well so as to have a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used in this study.

I. Theoretical Background:

Communicative Approach is found in the changes of the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. Clearly, several British linguists contributed to the formation of the Communicative Approach which aims to make “communicative competence” the goal of language teaching and develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication (Hymes, 1972). That is, the origins of this approach have arisen both in linguistics and in language teaching as a reaction against the view of language as a set of structures (Brumfit, 1979). Due to the influences of cognitive theory in language teaching, there had been a considerable shift from emphasis of the mastery of language structure to language use, from perceiving language as a set of rules to perceiving it as a means of communication (Brumfit, 1979). Formerly, linguistics was concerned mainly with the structure of a language. In other words, language teachers were mainly interested in grammatical correctness. That is to say, the focus was on exactness and grammatical
mastering of language rather than fluency of language. Or as Brumfit (1979) put it clearly, “The form rather than the meaning has dominated the teaching field” (Brumfit, 1979). Eventually, it had been found that the knowledge of grammar rules itself does not enable students to use the language for communicative purposes sufficiently. Communication does not imply just composing correct sentences but using them. As a result of this discovery, a reaction towards a view of language as a communication tool has developed (Brumfit, 1979). That is, the communicative approach places emphasis on developing the communicative competence, viewed as the overall underlying knowledge and ability for language use which the speaker-listener possesses.

1. Structuralism versus Communicative Approach:

Communicative approach as indicated above came as a reaction or a movement against the structure approach to language which proved to be ineffective and non-contextual. Before communicative approach to teaching language was developed, success or failure in language learning, as interpreted both through examination results and through student or teacher judgment, has generally come to be assessed in terms of ability to manipulate the structures of the language (Brumfit, 1979). Over a period of time, it was realized by linguists that such syllabi were mainly dominated by the teaching of language forms. The aspects of meaning, notions and functions were available at the periphery, but their presence was not as per the perception of the communicative theory. This happened because the proclaimed characteristic feature of Bloom fieldian and neo- Bloom fieldian. American structuralism was its careful concern to restrict itself to the study of form, and the classifications of the forms of a language, without reference to the categories of meaning. Linguistics was almost exclusively the study of language structure (Brumfit, 1979).

The linguists under the influence of structuralism were mainly found formulating rules that could describe grammatical sentences. Competence was given primacy and was perceived as native speakers’ linguistic code. This is well explained by Widdowson (1979) when he describes this approach as, “Language items are presented in situations in the classroom to ensure that their meaning is clear, and then practiced as formal structures by means of exercises of sufficient variety to sustain the interest of the learner and in sufficient numbers to establish the structures in the learners’ memory. The principal aim is to promote knowledge of the language system, to develop the learners’ competence (to use Chomsky’s terms) by means of controlled performance. The assumption behind this approach seems to be that learning a language is a matter of associating the formal elements of the language system with their physical realization … Essentially, what is taught by this approach is the ability to compose correct sentences”(Widdowson, 1979).

Since the mid 1970s, the scope of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has broadened significantly. Both British and American proponents of this approach consider it as an approach which aims at making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and developing certain procedures for such teaching that pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language. Communicative approach proposes to consider the communicative value of everything which is taught. Items are not just taught because they are there, but each item in the syllabus is justified on the basis of the communicative needs of the learners (Wilkins, 1979). Opposed to this view of language teaching, there emerged the communicative approach, which is explained by Brumfit & Johnson in the following words, “It is a reaction against the view of language as a set of structures, it is a reaction towards a view of language as communication, a view in which meaning and the uses to which language is put to play a central part; in language teaching, this reaction is crystallizing itself into the communicative approach” (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979).

There emerged a significant attention to consider the communicative contextual function of language, especially after a number of remarkable studies done by several theorists such as Hymes in his essay “On Communicative Competence” and by Halliday in his essay “Towards a Sociological Semantics”
and by Allen and Widdowson in their essay, “Teaching the communicative use of English” (Brumfit, 1979). It is under the influence of these remarkable studies and due to the emergence of sociolinguistics, pragmatics and discourse studies that linguists are able to recognize the other internalized rules of the native speakers who were considered significant in determining language behavior. Meaning and language use were started to be looked at with a new perspective, where linguists were able to identify new dimensions. Such aspects as extra linguistic constrains, the sociolinguistic considerations of appropriateness, the communicative context…, came forward to explain that meaning does not exist ready-made in the linguistic code, but is rather a function of the relationships between language forms, functions and context, including the intentions of the speaker and the expectations of the hearer (Wesche, 1983). Wesche (1983) further states in this regard, “In this perspective language competence is viewed as a complex system of rule sets which operate simultaneously at many levels to determine the organization of grammatical forms for the fulfillment of communicative and other language functions; Language competence is not “additive”, or the sum of discrete sets of syntactic, phonological, morphological, semantic, and discourse level items and organizational systems” (Wesche, 1983).

In this regard, learners are encouraged to consider language not only in terms of its structures (grammar and vocabulary), but also in terms of the communicative functions that it performs. By giving opportunities to use the language for real communicative purposes, the teacher helps students to develop strategies for relating the structures of a language to the communicative functions they can perform. In his “Communicative language Teaching” Littlewood (1981) suggests various purposes of using communicative activities in the classroom. According to his opinion, such activities should provide whole-task practice, improve motivation, allow natural learning, and be able to create a context which supports learning. To give more detailed explanation to each of his suggestions, when the learners have had enough practice in the part-skills, communicative activities provide a useful opportunity to train the total skill communication in foreign language (Littlewood, 1981). Clearly, learners can realize the relationship between their classroom work and the ability to communicate in real world communicative activities, which is the final objective of their studies. Littlewood (1981) states that it is likely that many aspects of language learning can take place only through natural processes which are in progress when a person is involved in using the language for communication (Littlewood, 1981).

Therefore, communicative activities play an important role in the total learning process. These activities also create opportunities to build relationships among all people involved in the learning process. Therefore, a shift towards warmer and more supportive learning environment can be achieved. For example, Littlewood (1981) divides communicative activities into functional communication and social interaction ones. Functional communication activities are designed for the learners to use whatever language they have at their disposal. Therefore, the success is measured primarily by their ability to cope with the given task, not by their grammatical accuracy and appropriateness of their choice of the language. Social interaction activities place emphasis also on choosing language which is acceptable according to the particular situation. Consequently, the success is measured according to both the function effectiveness and correct language choice (Littlewood, 1981). Finally, it is important to point out that the communicative approach often places the responsibility for fulfilling the tasks on the learners themselves. The teacher creates a situation and sets an activity, but his role during the activity is not direct, he can serve as a guide, advisor or observer, but the main responsibility for coming to a conclusion lies on his students.

1.1 Strategies of Testing Communicative Approach:

Communicative language tests are used to measure language learners’ ability to take part in acts of communication. Such communication skills development is the gate to perform and use language in real life situations. Canale and Swain (1980) have tried to bring a coherent focus by qualifying the
concept of communicative competence into the following four areas of knowledge:

i. Grammatical Competence:

This aspect of communicative competence is understood to reflect the knowledge of the language itself. It includes knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, sentence grammar, semantics and phonology (Canale and Swain, 1980). Such competence represents directly all the knowledge and skills required to understand and express correctly the literal meaning.

ii. Socio-linguistic Competence:

Socio-linguistic competence refers to the extent to which utterances are produced and interpreted differently in different socio-linguistic situations. This was made up of socio-cultural rules of use and rules of discourse (Canale and Swain, 1980). In this context, appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form becomes significant.

iii. Discourse Competence:

This competence was an addition in 1983 which refers to mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken context in different genres such as narrative, descriptive or reflective writing. It concerns mastery of cohesion and coherence. The main implication of discussing these three components of communicative competence indicates that these communicative competences establish a theoretical distinction between competence and performance, and that the learner needs to be tested not only on his/her knowledge, but also on his/her ability to put this knowledge to use in communicative situations.

Bachman (1990) further elaborates on these competences:

- **Language Competence**: Bachman (1990) defined language competence as a set of components that are utilized in communication via language.

- **Strategic Competence**: It consists of three components: assessment, planning and execution. It is the mental capacity to implement language competence appropriately in the situation in which communication takes place, and involves socio-cultural and real world knowledge (Miyata, Boddy & Langham, 2000).

1.2 Communicative Approach and Classroom Participation:

Communicative approach pedagogy is inspiring teachers to shift the focus within classes from developing student’s accuracy of language to developing their skills of performance in context. This obviously entails an active engagement of the students in the heart of the class activities through their active participation to the course. In fact, several researches have been done regarding the value and importance of student participation in classroom discussion. Few, if any, instructors would dispute the position that students who participate in class learn more.

This is, after all, how most of us feel we learn the best. However, actual evidence to support this hypothesis seems somewhat lacking. This will be the focus of the second part of this research paper. For most educators, it is almost intuitive that creating an environment where students freely converse and share ideas cannot help but foster a better understanding of course material and an appreciation for what it means to be a mature learner and thinker. But educators must be cautious in their assertions. Today’s teachers must be aware of the ever-changing nature of the classroom and the wide diversity of learners. We must continuously re-evaluate what we know to be the “truth” about education. Before considering the importance of classroom participation, it is first necessary to define the term.

Wade (1994) considered the ideal class participation and discussion as one in which all students were participating, learning, and listening to others’ ideas, comments, and questions (Wade, 1994). With this definition, it seems that it would still be possible to be passively engaged in the classroom experience. The intent; however, is to somehow force or preferably motivate students to become actively engaged in what is occurring in the classroom. For example, Isenberg (1991) proposed small group discussions as one way to force students to become actively and decisively engaged in the
classroom discussion. He stated that in these small groups, students feel like they are becoming members in the discursive community (Isenberg, 1991). This means that a genuine learning is that which is active not passive. It involves the use of the mind, not just the memory. That is, it is the process of discovery in which the student is the main agent, not the teacher. In parallel to the aforementioned characteristics of student’s classroom participation, we refer back to the communicative approach whose principles further encourage and call for student’s participation in class. Communicative approach as indicated above tries to surpass the traditional approaches of delivering the curriculum content to equipping students with critical thinking. For example, Morgan (1991) states, “Critics have asserted that the traditional stand and delivery style of teaching no longer does the job, that it fails to develop students critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and that it suppresses natural creativity and curiosity” (Morgan, 1999).

2. Classroom Participation Obstacles:

Despite the importance of Communicative Approach to teaching which implies students’ engagement and participation to the teaching-learning process, there could be hindrances and obstacles that may influence student’s participation in class. The teacher in this regard must be aware of the types of social pressures that often motivate student behavior. For instance, Sadker (1994) holds that fear of embarrassment may very well prevent the types of interactions that most teachers desire (Sadker, 1994). Moreover, Larkin and Pines (2003) argue that the attempt to include students in the classroom discussion can sometimes have undesired effects, leading to what they term avoidance behavior. They do, however, offer several methods to illicit student interaction while countering the fear of being embarrassed, receiving social disapproval, and doing poorly in public that is sometimes prevalent in college-aged students, particularly those of the female persuasion (Larkin, 2003).

Another obstacle that may stand against student’s participation ability is the classroom climate and atmosphere. Classroom climate can be defined as the physical setting and structure of the course (Rocca, 2010). Rocca (2010) attributed six main areas to classroom climate: (a) location, (b) classroom aesthetics and comfort, (c) arrangement of furniture, (d) time of day, (e) class size, and (f) course requirements (Rocca, 2010). For example, classroom atmosphere such as the availability of technological devices on the part of both, students and the institution can affect participation, in as much as those who are less technologically-savvy may exhibit lower rates of participation (Hurt, 2008).

The difference between a well designed decorated classroom and a sterile classroom as Sommer & Olsen (1980) call it was shown by an experience these two researchers have affected on their classrooms. Sommer & Olsen (1980) renovated a traditional classroom characterized by sterile, white walls and hard student desks by colorfully painting and decorating walls, adding plants and comfortable furniture. The changes resulted in a dramatic increase in participation rates (from 7% to a high of 85% in some classes). Additionally, physical arrangement of student desks in traditional, forward-facing rows with the professor positioned in the front of the room has been demonstrated to decrease participation. Alternate seating arrangements, such as a circular or horseshoe configuration, may either enhance or hinder student interaction (Inderbitzin & Storrs, 2008).

Another important element that may hinder students’ participation is class size. In large classes, various things may explain the reluctance of students to participate, including fear of slowing down delivery of class content, negative reactions from peers, etc. Class’s large size may also influence professors’ choice of teaching methods. That is, teachers could opt for traditional methods to teach in order to cover the curriculum content on time. Classroom size has shown to have a direct and indirect impact on participation (Weaver, 2005). Larger classrooms promote anonymity among students and raise the level of fear as they now have to contribute in front of a larger crowd which could result in a larger amount of disapproval from peers (Weaver, 2005). Auster & MacRone (1994) argued that classrooms with over 40 students had low
participation rates (Auster C. J., 1994). This was later supported by Weaver (2005) by adding that classrooms with over 40 students did not have a sufficient amount of time allocated to discussion due to lectures and therefore limited the extent to which a student could contribute to discussion and ultimately raise participation levels (Weaver, 2005). On the other hand, higher levels of participation have been recorded due to the student being more comfortable in an intimate classroom setting and therefore having less anxiety (Myers, 2009).

A proclivity to passive lecture has been observed in connection with larger class sizes, while active pedagogies tend to be associated with smaller class sizes (Feld, 1977). In fact, the literature predominantly describes increased class size as a hindrance to active learning and participation. Although class size has been demonstrated to influence participation, the greater influence may be teacher’s choice or the curriculum orientation of the traditional pedagogies and approaches to teaching. The choice of pedagogical practices, such as engaging pedagogies, regardless of class size, may foster more participation (Becker, 1973). Added to these elements, the characteristics of the institution, its teaching methods and ability to manage the classroom environment could play an important role in the increase or decrease of students’ participation. For example, Crookes (2013) holds that the use of teaching methods that aim to actively engage students in the classroom may increase classroom participation (Crookes, 2013). These methods include questioning, case studies, small group discussion, role playing, gaming, clicker technology, and simulation. On the other hand, passive classrooms in which students are spectators rather than participants can result in distracting activities such as sleeping, texting, and conversations with classmates that interfere with engaged learning (Auster & Wylie, 2006).

Another important element behind students’ participation is student traits. As individuals, we differ in personalities and not everybody is the same. For example, Weaver (2005) holds that confidence is a key trait that students struggle with and has a direct effect on participation (Weaver, 2005). That is to say, students deal with fears of not being smart enough to address their class and therefore hold back on providing insight on subject matter due to intimidation. Anxiety and nervousness, independent of classroom logistics, inhibit students from communicating instead of building their confidence through participation. Research has shown that this is linked to classroom apprehension which is defined by Neer (1987) as the avoidance of participation prompted by evaluation apprehension or expectations of negative outcomes associated with participation (Neer, 1987).

For example, Wade (1994) noted that students will only engage in class if they feel that what they have to say is important and interesting. Neer and Kircher (1989) added that students dealing with classroom apprehension felt more comfortable participating only when they became familiar with their peers and therefore felt more comfortable in expressing themselves (Neer, 1989). That is to say, classroom apprehension can be mitigated by allowing students to prepare for discussion prior to class. By doing so, they become more comfortable with the subject matter and can organize their thoughts so that they would be able to participate in classroom discussion. This can be done through homework, readings, role play with classmates, and brainstorming. Furthermore, students who are not native English speakers are less likely to participate in classroom discussion in English due to a lack of confidence in their language abilities thus lowering the level of participation in the classroom (Kao, 1995). More important to classroom participation is the preparation for the course. Fear is an issue many students face as they may not have sufficient knowledge and may be dealing with insecurities in the classroom (Weaver, 2005). Research shows that some students reported to not be participating in classes if they did not prepare on the subject matter prior to coming to class, therefore did not feel comfortable engaging in discussion (Howard, 2002). In this regard, Students may get worried that they would be criticized by both their peers and professors, for not being well informed on the subject matter. This ties in with confidence and
therefore students who do prepare for class tend to be more confident and as a result participate in discussions.

In a word, communicative approach is being confessed remarkable significance due to its impact on students’ performance. Simply, applying communicative approach to teaching may help students to use English in context, tease their creative skills and develop their fluency. Furthermore, this approach revolves around the centrality of the student as a core entity in the learning - teaching process. It provides the opportunity to the student to participate on a large scale during the course and content delivery and assumes the student as an active agent in this whole process. Yet, we can’t deny the hindrances that may stand against the application of the communicative approach and its core components amongst which is the opportunity to student’s classroom participation. Obstacles such as classroom atmosphere, class size, students particular traits, preparation of the course could stand against the practical successful application of the communicative approach and against; therefore, student’s classroom effective participation.

2.1 Methodology Section:

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the methodology applied in approaching this topic. It starts by presenting the research hypothesis that will be either confirmed or rejected, the research questions, the research variables, the sample population, the research approaches and the data collection instruments that this study applies. In this study, it is hypothesized that teachers do not apply the communicative language approach to teaching English language because of the large classes they teach, they are not acquainted with the CLA necessary skills and the time preparation the CLA requires.

2.2 Research Variables:

There are two variables in this study. The first variable is the dependent variable and it is the lack of implementing the CLA by English language teachers and the independent variables are the large classes teachers teach, teachers’ lack of CLA necessary skills and the time preparation the CLA requires.

3. Sample Population:

In this study, the population sample chosen is English language teachers and 2nd year baccalaureate students. This population is chosen because it represents the category of people that is concerned with the issue. Random sampling is the technique used in order to choose a representative sample of these people. This technique of sampling is chosen because it is more objective, and it gives the chance to everyone to participate in the study. The research paper opted for 2nd Baccalaureate students belonging to different classes without having any stream(s) specifically in mind. The choice of the English teachers is also random because the research doesn’t focus on teachers with many years of experience or on novice teachers, but it is done randomly. The total numbers of participants who participate in this study are 200 2nd Year Baccalaureate students and 30 teachers from Taza and Taounante provinces, respectively. The sampling could be generalizable for the whole population as it conforms to the humanities and social sciences research norms. The results are reliable and resourceful for the explanation of the hindrances of the implementation of the communicative language teaching in Taza and Taounante regions.

3.1 Research Approach:

Both the qualitative and the quantitative approaches will be used in this study. The quantitative approach will be helpful in determining the profiles of students with whom teachers are more likely to apply or not apply the CLA, and finding out the different factors that prevent teachers from applying the CLA and the measures that can help teachers use this approach. On the other hand, the qualitative approach will be useful in eliciting more in-depth explanations from students and teachers about why teachers do not apply the CLA. Mixing both approaches will increase the validity and the reliability of the data, and thus the quality of the findings.
3.2 Data collection procedures:

The first data collection procedure to be used in this study is the questionnaire. It is a quantitative data collection instrument used to measure whether the teachers use the CLA or not, and the students’ preferred method of acquiring the language and their frequent exposure to communicative classrooms. Since one of the weaknesses of the questionnaire is its limitation with respect to eliciting in depth answers and information from the teachers and students, interviews are also used to collect data. This qualitative data collection procedure allows the respondents the time and scope to talk about their opinions on the topic being investigated, and it allows the researchers to elicit in-depth information around it.

II. Data analysis:

This chapter presents, analyzes and discusses the quantitative and qualitative data collected. The chapter is divided into four sub parts. The first one provides general information about the respondents participated in this study. The second sub part describes the students’ and teachers’ educational issues related to applying the communicative language approach. The third sub-part demonstrates the reasons that prevent teachers from applying the communicative language approach from students’ and teachers’ points of view. The fourth one analyzes the measures that can help teachers apply the communicative language approach from students and teachers’ perspectives.

1. General Information about the Respondents (teachers)

In this study, both genders participated. As the figure indicates, 35% of the respondents are females and 75% are males. Since both genders teach English language, both views should be included in this study.

Concerning the levels teachers teach, 50% as the graph above shows represent common core classes, whereas, the other fifty percent is divided between first and second Year Baccalaureate students.
In relation to the teaching experience, 64.7% of the respondents, which is the majority of this study’s, are novice teachers. Among the teachers participating in the study 64.7%, 7% teach the common core level, 52.9% of them teach first baccalaureate students and 41.2% teach second year Baccalaureate students.

1.1 Methods and approaches teachers apply:

i. Student’s Majors:

The above majors shown in this graph are the Majors of the students of the teachers participating in the study. 82.4% of the students, the vast majority, are oriented to literary and scientific stream. As it is indicated above, 82% of teachers express their preference to the use of grammar translation method which is considered the most traditional in language teaching. We can say that the majority of teachers of English teachers resort to this classical method because of many reasons; such as; the overcrowded classes, the low level of students and the limited time. So that, they use deductive grammar (study of grammar rules, these rules are applied to the construction of sentences) and use the native language freely as a means of instruction. This method puts emphasis on accuracy rather than fluency.

1.2 Methods English teachers tend to use:

Communicative approach is one of the methods that is used by 52% of teachers. In which, the teacher’s role is only a facilitator rather than an instructor, and the focus is on developing communicative skills before reading and writing through conversations, discussions and role plays. Briefly, this approach is meant to develop the learner’s ability to engage in real communication using the target language, but teachers complain about the students’ lack of motivation for classroom activities. On the other hand, 29% of teachers are more likely to use the structural approach, this method is defined by Brewington as “the scientific study of the fundamental structures of English language, their analysis and logical arrangement”. It is characterized by the importance of word order and the function words help in modifying the meaning.

2. The extent to which teachers apply CLS:
As it is clearly indicated in the graph, 70, 6 % of teachers do not apply the communicative approach in teaching English language, they resort to other classical methods as a means to teach the target language and this is due to many reasons which will be mentioned in the following graph. Only 29, 4% of teachers prefer to use the communicative language approach inside their classrooms as an effective way to teach English.

2.1 Reasons that may prevent teachers from using CLA:

This figure is meant to tackle the reasons that impede the implementation of the communicative language approach to teaching English. It attempts to explain why English teachers do not apply the CLA in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is true that the Moroccan educational curriculum has shifted towards the incorporation of CLA in English classrooms in the last decades, but there are still other factors which make it very challenging for the English teachers to apply CLA. As it is mentioned above, 76, 5%, the majority of English teachers totally agree that they use this approach because of the crowded classes they teach.

Teaching large classes makes it almost impossible to manage, for example, group work, role play, games or any other communication activities to help students learn the language communicatively. That is, in classrooms ranging between 31 and 40 students, it is difficult for the teachers to reach students at the back of the classroom and have contact with them and get their attention.

In addition to time constraints and lack of appropriate materials, students’ low level of English is another factor which prevents teachers from giving communicatively-oriented classes. 64,7% of teachers assume that their students do not even have the basics, which makes it difficult for the teacher to opt for the student centered approach to learning and teaching and give, as Brown (2008) claims, “students ownership over what content should be taught and makes them motivated” (Brown, 2008). This is also confirmed when conducting interviews with the teachers concerning giving communicative classes for the 2nd baccalaureate students that using the student-centered approach and giving the students the chance to have control over what they learn and motivate them necessitate that students should have the basic English rules and vocabulary to be able to communicate. A high school English teacher states that: “I teach 40 second year Baccalaureate students of both streams, literature and science; I try many times to give communicatively-oriented classes by maintaining group work, pair work, use Information Technology (IT) and give real examples…. to motivate them, but in vain; students try to engage in the activity being done, but their language proficiency is extremely low; most of the time they do not understand what is going on” (Second Year Baccalaureate English Teacher, Taounante Region).

2.2 Measures to take for the implementation of CLA:
As the figure above indicates, 88.2% of teachers, the majority, consider having limited number of students inside the classrooms as a solution that can help teachers apply the communicative approach. This justifies that when teachers have overcrowded classes, they resort to applying the traditional way of teaching which is transmitting the information to students and thus students become passive learners which leads to dispossessing them from the opportunity to communicate and practice the language inside classrooms. On the contrary, and as the figure shows, when teachers have limited number of students, applying the CLA is more likely to occur and students have more chances to speak, communicate and practice English language. This fact has been confirmed by an interviewee who declares that: “As an English language teacher, I have two methods of teaching which is mainly determined by the number of students I have inside the class. Whenever I have a class that encompasses between 10 and 20 students, I find it very easy to apply the CLA and that occurs when I have classes majored in scientific majors. But whenever I have large classes, it seems to me very challenging to execute CLA.”

On the other hand, only 41% of teachers consider in-service training as a solution that can help teachers apply the CLA. This means that even if teachers receive training of how to implement the CLA and have overcrowded classes, they will not apply it because they are faced with a big challenge which is large classes.

3. General Information about the Respondents (students):

i. Students Gender:

The same thing for students, both genders participated in this study. As the figure shows, 63.4% of the respondents are female students and 36.6% are male ones. Both genders were given the opportunity to participate in this study so as to have both views; female students views and male students views.

ii. Students Age:

As far as age is concerned, 47.3% of the students are 17 years old. Since this study is concerned with 2nd year Baccalaureate students, it is normal that the age of the majority of this category of people are 17 years old. And to have students aged between 17 and 18 and sometimes over 18 years old, is an ordinary issue because there are students who are repeaters and consequently they would be older by one, two or sometimes three years than the other students.

iii. Students Major:
The above majors shown in this graph are the majors of the students participating in the study. 55% of the students, the majority, opt for literary stream. 33% of them choose Earth and Life Sciences (SVT). However, only 10.8%, the minority, study physics and no one opts for Mathematics.

3.1.1 Approaches students prefer to learn English language:

Communicative language approach is the preferred approach that students like their teachers to use. 50% of students prefer to be taught English through the communicative approach while 39.8% of them like the traditional method. What can be inferred from this graph is that the students, though with limited English, find it useful to guarantee their understanding of the lessons that their teachers deliver. The teachers seem not to help the students when applying the traditional method as the students are not given the chance to participate.

3.1.2 Methods teachers opt for to urge students develop their speaking and communicative skills:

After the students are asked about the ways their teachers use to motivate them and develop their communicative skills, 87.1% of them say that their teachers use the pair and group work techniques, the only possible way they resort to because the classrooms are not equipped with technological tools that smoothly facilitate the use of other techniques. Presentations are rarely delivered by the students since they do not have a good command of English, and are most of the time traditionally presented if they are given. Role play is used, but it is not the focus of the teachers because the students are not capable of expressing themselves easily.

3.2.2 Students Opinion about Teachers’ Use of the CLA inside the Classroom:

This figure illustrates the students’ opinions about the use of the communicative language teaching inside the classroom. 62.4% of the students contend that their teachers make use of it to motivate them and enable them to develop their communicative
abilities and skills. Because there is no administrative support at school, teachers do not use the CLA. While interviewing the teachers about their role in the classroom, they claim that their expected role cannot be fulfilled due to the lack of the appropriate materials. One of the teachers being interviewed declared that: “I teach in classroom with an out-dated classroom givens. Many textbook activities and other extra materials which I try to use require the use of ICT. At school, however, there is only one data show to use but it is not working. How can a teacher of English facilitate the learning by guiding the students without the help of appropriate materials?”

Having a look at both students and teachers’ responses concerning the use of CLA, one might notice that there is a contradiction between the two. 62, 4% of students argue that their teachers use the CLA while 76, 5% of teachers say that they do not apply it. In fact, the majority of the students filling the questionnaires and interviewed by the present researchers do not understand what CLA really means. They believe that the CLA is all about being questioned sometimes by their teachers about a vocabulary a grammatical rule, etc. They still confuse the role of the teacher in Grammar- Translated Method with the CLA not because it is not used, but because they dislike it. This is noticeable by the present researchers when conducting interviews with the students. Many of them show their resentment of the traditional method and recommend teachers to apply it no matter what the classroom circumstances are.

4. Measures that should be Done to urge teachers apply the Communicative Approach from Students’ Perspective

In relation to students, 74, 2% of them consider the availability of appropriate teaching materials as a measure that helps in applying the CLA by teachers. This seems at the beginning contradictory with what teachers claim -limited number of students is the measure that helps in applying the CLA- but this contradiction can be analyzed as the following: students inside the classroom are not aware, like teachers, that every student should have the chance to speak and experiment with the language and having a large class reduces and minimizes this chance. For students, they just analyze things from their own point of view; therefore, they deem that teaching materials availability is the solution and thus they do not realize that even if the materials are available and the number of students is very high the CLA would not be applied as it should be.

The second measure that may help teachers apply the CLA and which is chosen by 61.3% of students is to have limited number of students. Thus, students realize that having a small number of students helps them a lot and enables them to speak English language, communicate and speak inside the classroom. This idea is advocated by an interviewee, 2nd year baccalaureate student, who states that: “I am now a student in a scientific stream, we are few students, and everyone of us has the opportunity to speak, communicate and express him or herself and at the same time the teacher corrects and guides everyone of us; unlike when we were in the ninth grade, we studied in large classes and we rarely had the chance to communicate in English”.

5. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research of the Study:

This research study has demonstrated the use of the communicative language approach among the English teachers of Taza and Taounate regions. To clearly depict whether the CLA is adopted by English language teachers in these regions, both teachers and students were interviewed and contributed to filling questionnaires destined to collect as much data as possible so that the researchers could have a clear image about the implementation of the CLA. The study does prove
the hypothesis and the research questions early stated above. That is, the analysis of the data, however, shows that the CLA is not used inside classrooms because of the obstacles and the hindrances for both teachers and students, the graphs of the research above demonstrate this in details. This implies that there is a gap between the incorporation of this approach by the ministry of education and the classroom situations. There is a huge emphasis on the implementation of CLA by Moroccan education policy makers in settings where this incorporation cannot flourish. It is true that CLA came to stress authentic learning and teaching by including technology to facilitate this process, but the classroom givens and the number of the targeted groups cannot help to smoothly integrate it.

The study also has proven that the implementation of the communicative approach requires in-service training for English teachers as well. English teachers are also in dire need to constant trainings to be able to know how to design and deliver communicative lessons to develop the students’ communicative skills and competencies. The CLA is appreciated by the 2nd bac students as it suits their needs, but it is only a minority of teachers that utilize it even though its entire components are not included. Therefore, it is highly recommended that researchers interested in this field conduct academically well-informed fieldwork studies that take into account the students’ needs. That is to say, do the textbooks really fit the students’ needs or not? The gap between the implementation of the communicative approach and the reality of the classroom situation might also be a worthwhile researching topic for future research. This study is not immune from shortcomings and limitations; the researchers were not completely successful in making the respondents fully aware of the CLA before proceeding to the interview and questionnaire techniques. This resulted in making the respondents a little bit confused about what this approach really means, mainly when they had to fill the questionnaire and say which method was being used by their teachers. Time constraint of the conduction of the study is not enough as the researchers had to simultaneously teach for many hours and start conducting action research at the very beginning of the semester and wait until the remedial work is done.

**Conclusion:**

Throughout the last decades, the Communicative Language Approach has been adopted by the Moroccan ministry of education to facilitate the teaching-learning process through authentic and life-like learning situations and to develop the students’ communicative skills and competencies which could not be achieved through classical methods. Even though this approach is incorporated by the Moroccan education system, students do not develop their communicative skills and competencies because it is not fully implemented. There is a huge gap between the teachers in-service trainings they receive at the training centers and the classroom situation. This study investigates the reasons that impede the implementation of this approach. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative studies are conducted to determine the factors that prevent its application. Interviews focus groups and questionnaires are conducted with English teachers and 2nd year baccalaurate students to clearly detect these factors.

The research proved that the hypothesis stated at the very beginning is verified; the teachers tend not to use the communicative approach in English language teaching. Because of the large classes they teach, they are not acquainted with the necessary skills to apply it and the time preparation it needs. Moreover, the students’ low level of English and the lack of appropriate materials are the main factors which hinder its implementation. Both teachers and students agree upon the same hindrances. 82% of teachers resort to not using the communicative approach while only 50% of them use it not regularly even their students prefer to learn through it. There seems to be a consensus among the teachers and students concerning the lack of the application of CLA even though the students do not fully grasp the meaning of the CLA. (see the graphs above about students’ preference of the methods to learn English). 76.5%, of teachers use traditional
methods because of the crowded classrooms while 64% of them claim that students’ low level of English is what prevents them from applying it. 80% of students believe that their lack of English proficiency is the sole impediment why their teachers could not use CLA.

Appendix A:

English language Teachers’ questionnaire:

1. What is your Gender
   - Male
   - Female

2. Teaching experience
   - Less than 1 year
   - 3 years
   - 6 years
   - More than 6 years

3. Levels you teach: you can tick more than one level
   - Common core
   - 1st year bac
   - 2nd year Bac

4. Your students’ major
   - Literary stream
   - Scientific stream
   - Both streams

5. What are the methods that you think English language teachers are more likely to use?
   - a) Grammar - Translation method
   - b) Structural approach
   - c) Communicative Approach
   - d) Other Methods: please cite it or them

6. In your opinion, do teachers apply the communicative approach in teaching English language?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I do not know

7. If no, what are the reasons that prevent teachers from using the communicative approach?
   - Overcrowded classes
   - Time constraints
   - Teachers did not receive a training to use such method
   - Students’ misbehavior
   - Students’ resistance of communicative approach
   - Lack of appropriate materials
   - Students low level of English language proficiency
   - Others, please cite them

8. In your opinion, what are the measures that should be done to urge teachers apply the communicative approach:
   - To have limited number of students
   - In-service training for teachers
   - Availability of appropriate materials

Appendix B

Students’ Questionnaire

1. What is your age?
   - 17
   - 18
   - Over 18
2. What is your gender?

Male □ Female □

3. What is your major?

Literary stream □ SVT □ Physics □ Mathematics □

4. How many students are in your classroom?

...............................................................

5. In your opinion, what is the best way for you to learn and speak English language? tick the answer that best reflects your opinion:

Traditional way □ Communicative way □ the mixture of both ways □ none of them □

6. According to you, what is the way that you prefer to learn and speak English language?

...............................................................

7. As a student, what do your teachers do to motivate you and urge you to develop your speaking and communicative skills? You can tick more than one answer:

Group and pair work □ Role play □ Presentation □ Games □
Others (mention them)

...............................................................

8. According to you, do your English language teachers use the CLA inside the classroom?

Yes □ NO □ Sometimes □

9. If some teachers do not use the CLA in teaching English language, what are the reasons that prevent them from doing so? You can tick more than one answer:

| Reason                                |
|---------------------------------------|
| Overcrowded classes                   |
| Time constraints                      |
| Students’ misbehavior                 |
| Lack of appropriate materials         |
| Students low level of English language proficiency |
| Others, please cite them              |

10. What are the measures that should be done to urge teachers apply the communicative approach? You can tick more than one answer:

| Measure                                |
|---------------------------------------|
| To have limited number of students    |
| In-service training for teachers      |
| Availability of appropriate materials |

Appendix C:

Teachers’ interview guide

1. What is the average number of students you have inside your classroom?

2. What are the methods that you think English language teachers are more likely to use?
3. In your opinion, do teachers apply the communicative approach in teaching English language?

4. In your opinion, what are the reasons that prevent teachers from using the communicative approach?

5. In your opinion, what are the measures that should be done to urge teachers apply the communicative approach?

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