CLT in policy documents and EFL curricula

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Since the use of English expanded throughout the post-Soviet states, the trend towards the use of the grammar-translation method in EFL teaching in schools can still be prominent in post-Soviet countries (Hasanova, 2007). It is common knowledge that this approach often results in low communicative language competence. Thus, the primary purpose of this paper is to discover whether the grammar-translation method is still promoted or is replaced or shifted to CLT.

The paper presents a critical analysis of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the contexts of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan through analyzing the goals and objectives in the policy documents regarding the teaching of English to track whether the goals determine CLT. Besides, the paper aims at discovering whether the goals in curricula are directed toward developing communicative competence in learners.

Keywords: communicative language learning, grammar-translation, English as a foreign language, curriculum, language policy

Introduction

As English is spread across the world as a lingua franca, corresponding language policies are being developed, the aim of which varies in different contexts. In turn, these policies shape the English language curricula in terms of the objectives and learning outcomes that should be achieved through the use of appropriate teaching methodologies in English as foreign language (EFL) classrooms. The use of a particular methodology can also be stated in the policy documents of a country that aims at developing concrete linguistic skills that are applicable and adjustable as much in career paths as in daily life. As Hasanova (2016) indicates, there is a wide held belief among Central Asian nations that "the knowledge of English is an essential skill for those who are eager to achieve personal growth, career paths, and advanced education" (p. 245). It is well known that second and foreign language teaching rely on a particular teaching methodology. Brandl (2008) enumerates several methodologies such as audiolingual, cognitive-based, and grammartranslation methods of teaching. However, these methodologies were often critiqued for an extensive memorization of vocabulary and certain set expressions. Hence, in the 1960s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) arose to operationalize the communicative competence (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

A growing body of international research has examined communicative language teaching (CLT) as a component of language planning/policy and its implementation within many teaching pedagogies in EFL contexts (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Diallo, 2014; Thornbury, 2017; Hasanova, 2007; 2016). Diallo (2014), for example, indicates that teaching pedagogies are "influenced, shaped and determined by

language planning activities" (p. 142). However, very little is known about the implementation of CLT in the Kazakhstani and Uzbekistani educational sectors, especially in the light of language in education policy. Since the use of the English language expanded throughout the post-Soviet states, the same trend towards the use of grammar-translation method in EFL teaching in schools can be prominent in post-Soviet countries (Hasanova, 2007). It has been a common practice in teaching English until recently. Similarly, this holds true for two post-Soviet states: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. As students were mainly given theoretical knowledge of English, there was a lack of practical use of the language. Pavlenko (2008) asserts that among the common language maintenance problems present in the post-Soviet countries, one of the major ones is low English language proficiency (p. 299). Therefore, it is important to analyze the curriculum and policy documents regarding language teaching in two countries in order to determine if these countries' language policy promotes grammartranslation method or shift to CLT. The salience of promoting of CLT can be driven by the integration of both countries to international arena, which, consequently, would require competent language users.

In this paper, I analyze the presence and implementation of CLT as a pedagogical approach for teaching English language in the curricula and language-related policy documents. Through analyzing the goals and objectives in the policy documents regarding the teaching of English it will be possible to track whether the goals determine CLT and the extent to which it is taken into consideration by policy-makers as a methodology in the present-day English language teaching. In addition, the paper aims at discovering whether the goals in curricula are directed toward developing communicative

competence in learners. As curricula are based on the policies that are made from top-down directionality with the involvement of a second or foreign language teacher specialists and linguists, it is important to identify whether they take into account the new methodologies that help students achieve a certain proficiency level through a communicative teaching and learning.

In the following sections, I will elaborate on the definitions of CLT in relation to curriculum and language in education policy. Afterwards, I will focus on each context separately by looking into the national educational curricula and policy documents regarding the implementation of EFL as subject.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) as a language teaching methodology

Language teaching methodology can be considered as an umbrella for various kinds of language teaching approaches such as grammar-translation, communicative, and audiolingual approaches. As Richards (2001) defines it, the concept of method is crucial in teaching as it is the "notion of a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language or language learning" (p. 2). In grammar-translation, which existed for several decades, the learning process is based on teaching how to translate texts on various themes from one language to another as well as memorizing the grammar rules for further application in the exercises (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). However, international and local experiences have clearly demonstrated that this and other earlier methods, such as grammar-based, grammar-translation-based, and audiolingual, challenge students' use of language for communication and their ability to think creatively and critically for a situational use of language (Bakirova et al., 2013; Diallo, 2014). Besides, it was believed by the reformers in the late twentieth century that a second language should be taught and learned naturally (Brandl, 2008). As a result, a new approach emerged from the need to focus on communication rather than the focus on grammatical features of the language and to substitute the grammar-based methods (Richards, 2001).

According to the chronology of language teaching methods that he suggested, the latest trend in instruction of a second or foreign language is the Communicative methodology or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It appeared as a methodology in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Bori, 2018; Brandl, 2008; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). According to Brandl (2008), CLT encompasses various

teaching approaches borrowed from second language acquisition techniques (p. 2). In traditional language classrooms with grammar-translation method, lessons were carried out in two consecutive stages: first, the teacher presented the new material to the students, e.g., writing topic-specific essays, making-up dialogues, doing grammatical and lexical exercises; and, afterwards, students were to practice them by revising (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). This kind of limited teaching methodology only builds the theoretical knowledge of a language. Compared to that, CLT allows students to actually use the language for communication purposes in an authentic manner without neglecting the essential grammatical aspects of the target language (Alamri, 2018). Unlike the traditional grammar-based approach, where teachers' take the leading role, this methodology is associated with the role of teachers as mediators, thus allocating more time for students' engagement (Ellis, 1996; as cited in Alamri, 2018).

Howatt and Widdowson (2004) ascribe the terms 'function' and 'activity' to CLT as it is a key feature of the CLT approach that emphasizes certain functions of language aligned to its use for communication since "students can draw on their communicative resources in order to produce appropriate language" (p. 258). It is worth mentioning that in CLT "learning takes place through struggling to communicate", which is nearly what happens to learners in real situations (Finnocchiaro & Brumfit, 2007; as cited in Alamri, 2018). Thus, CLT is believed to accommodate the learners to the language for everyday natural use, which is not separated from reality. The authors also indicate that the accommodation is normally seen in the connectedness of the language objectives of the curriculum and the learning materials (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

CLT as a language policy implementation approach

Richards (2001) views CLT not only as a standalone methodology but connects it with the change in "the nature of goals, objectives, and the syllabus in language teaching, and search for an appropriate methodology in the light of these changes" (p. 36). In this vein, it can be assumed that the curricula should be developed considering such goals and objectives that would be reflected in the teaching methodology in EFL classrooms. The author also highlights the problem of deciding what should be included in the curriculum and language syllabus as the role of selection is tremendous for identifying the content and expected skills (p. 4). Similarly, Stern (1984) views instruction and methodology as

part of EFL curriculum. He also offers a framework that integrates the components of communicative tasks that would substitute the grammar-based approach in developing a new curriculum. Those components are purposes of learning, setting, social role of speakers, communicative events, language functions, notions, discourse and rhetorical skills, a variety of language, grammar and lexical content (Stern, 1984). This implies that a language curriculum should be based on the learning outcomes of the learners that accomplished the communicative functions of the language. Such language-related decisions, namely the ones related to the consideration of pedagogies in terms of adopting a specific language teaching methods and approaches, should be made at the intersection of macro, meso, and micro levels of policy-making (Liddicoat, 2014).

According to Altman (1976), in the U.S., only a small number of teachers knew how to teach communication in the early days of CLT. This scarcity of knowledge about the communicative approach can be attributed to the lack of methodological freedom and the disparity between policy and the actual practice (Altman, 1976). As a result, there appears the "discrepancy between the stated purposes of foreign language teaching and the actual outcomes of foreign language learning" (p. 22). Furthermore, as mentioned above, while the teacher's role in CLT is to mediate the tasks, being indifferent to or not familiar with CLT can be a cause of the impediment for its successful implementation. Thus, the following section will elaborate on the status quo CLT in the curriculum and language policy documents.

CLT in curriculum and policy documents in Kazakhstan

This section outlines the history of the development and spread of English in Kazakhstani educational system, namely at secondary level education. Doing so will enable us to track the goals of ELT in different stages of the development of language policies for schools. As is common for almost all former Soviet states, the allocation of hours for teaching English in secondary schools began during the post-Soviet period, when English was recognized as the key instrument for globalization (Hasanova, 2016; Pavlenko, 2008). Among other foreign languages, English has become the most common language that is taught and studied at nearly all levels of education. Later, in 2011, the major policy document on languages of Kazakhstan - the State Program of Development and Functioning of Languages in Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 (2011) - indicated the in-

crease of studying English and other foreign languages as one of the key tasks. Kazakhstan's language policy has since gained the quick turn to trilingual education, which is aimed at achieving fluency in three languages by the year 2050 - Kazakh, Russian, and English as a foreign language (MoES, 2016). This is based on the state of the nation address of the former president Nursultan Nazarbayev that English should be the language of international communications. However, due to the dead-end grammar-based teaching pedagogies in EFL classrooms, students tended to take additional language courses in centres for private tutoring. According to the existing literature, almost half of the student population attending secondary and high schools in Kazakhstan sought assistance in learning English outside of school on a paid basis (Akimenko, 2017). Although it might be bound to various factors such as teacher training, poor organization of lesson curriculum and allocation of academic hours, this trend also holds true for the statement that ELT in schools is insufficiently organized while at the same time lacks effective methodology that develops competent language users (Bakirova et al., 2016). To the list of delineated issues, Suleimenova (2013) also adds the language anxiety, viewing it as a result of weak teaching approach (as cited in Plyushko, 2018). As a result, even though the government realized the importance of adding English as a subject in school curricula, little attention was given to the skills that should be achieved throughout the learning process for producing the competent speakers who could later serve for political and social activities with democratic purposes.

Based on that, there seems to be a shift in pedagogy administered by educational stakeholders by adopting new organizational instructions and developing the updated curricula. Interestingly, the State Program of the Development and Functioning of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 emphasizes the actions towards improving and standardizing the teaching methodology of the Kazakh language (MoC, 2011). Although the program states the need to achieve a certain level of English language proficiency for 25 percent of the Kazakhstani population, it does not specify the teaching methodology, as in the case of Kazakh. Moreover, the CLT is acknowledged in the policy document as a leading methodology in teaching foreign languages that engages students in various language activities including games, role plays, debates, group and individual work (NAE, 2018). But this methodology is given under the section for Kazakh language, which supports the goal of improving the teaching of the

state language by applying CLT in the Kazakh language classrooms.

In contrast, according to the National Academy of Education (NAE) (2018), teaching, learning, and curriculum of the foreign language as well as national languages are administered by the level-based model adopted from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Moreover, it is stated in the policy document "On the features of the organization of the educational process in secondary schools of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the 2018-2019 academic year" that the modern methodology of ELT which enables students to learn through communicative skills, is taken into account (NAE, 2018). Consequently, the curricula have been renewed by setting communication-oriented goals and learning outcomes. In addition to that, as NAE (2018) highlights, communicative approach in teaching a foreign language removed the students' academic workload that was intrinsic to the grammar-based teaching by reducing the purely grammatical content in the curriculum. The implementation of the communicative approach in teaching is carried out within the framework of trilingual education policy as there deemed to be communication across language and content subjects. Although this paper considers CLT solely in the EFL subject, the driving force for adopting this methodology seems to have appeared due to the transition to English medium education at the upper secondary education level. Nevertheless, it is not explicit in the policy documents and curricula whether the communicative competence development in EFL is carried out through CLT methodology as there are no specific references to that.

As for the learning objectives, NAE (2018) delineates the organizational features of the curriculum for foreign language which encompasses three languages based on the learner's choice such as English, French, and German. Thus, the goals are common and may apply to all three foreign languages. In particular, upon completion of general secondary level of education, the students should obtain the intercultural communication competence to be able to fluently communicate with native speakers of their target languages. According to NAE (2018), the language curriculum must comprise the following elements deemed essential for achieving a native-like level of competence: 1) expansion of grammatical and lexical units and speaking skills; 2) construction of logical connection between sentences. This seems to be a middle ground between grammar-translation and CLT methodologies.

On the other hand, according to the updated curriculum of education, there are norms and content area for English language that are adjusted by grades of secondary education. The updated curriculum intends to enhance the CLT in teaching a foreign language within the framework of trilingual education policy (Department of National Centre of Excellence, 2017). For example, starting from the 5th grade, learners are exposed to new lexicon and grammar. Following that, at the 6th grade teachers apply the CLT in order to develop the learners' communicative competencies whereas at the 7th grade, students are to revise the grammatical structures and rules once again (NAE, 2018). As it is clear from the document, these allocations are based on the English language curriculum dated 2013, which is still in use. Based on my experience, both as a student who has undergone such stages and as an intern, I can confirm that school teachers paid little attention to communicative language teaching. Besides, having had a professional internship on teaching English at a secondary education institution, I have witnessed the senior teachers' teaching methods such as repetitious memorization techniques of single words, excessive grammar exercises, and phonetic drills. Although teachers attempted to incorporate visual aids and interactive boards to increase student interaction, there still was a lack of communication and discussion among students. It can then be assumed that while some teachers realized the demands of learners for more communicative approach, others were resistant to changes and shifts in the methodology. The similar trend can be noticed today as well.

Overall, considering the way CLT is defined in the previous paragraph, it can be noted that there is an effort to modernize the language teaching approach in the Kazakhstani secondary education. Although, the elements of CLT - nearing that of the CEFR language skills such as reading, listening, speaking and writing - are outlined in the established by-law (MoES RK, 2019, March 7), there is a mismatch in the policies throughout the secondary level education concerning the distribution of the communicative practice in the curriculum. There, however, seems to be a shift in the overall pedagogical approach in ELT that is shaped by the decisions of policy makers. However, there rises a question on how CLT is implemented by teachers in their classes, how it is transferred to real educational practice in EFL classrooms.

CLT in curriculum and policy documents in Uzbekistan

The previous section discussed how Kazakhstan's language in education policy does not specify the teaching pedagogy directed to CLT, however, the educational standard shows a slight shift towards the development of communicative competencies and skills in language learners necessary today. To see how Kazakhstani language policy and secondary education curricula compare to Central Asian states, this section analyzes the policy enactment related to CLT in EFL education in the Uzbekistani context.

With regards to Uzbekistan, the most cited researcher in the field Hasanova (2016) summarizes that English started to be promoted during the Soviet period and extensively after its collapse. However, due to the censorship and the russification policy, only the grammatical competence was emphasized (p. 250). Russian was used as a language for doing translations and for instruction in the English language classes (Hasanova, 2007). More precisely, school teachers focused on such methodologies as reading and retelling texts, translating, and memorizing grammatical rules. In addition, Hasanova (2016) also describes the allocation of hours for EFL classes in the post-Soviet times, in which English started as a subject from the fifth grade. That is, the hours allocated for learning English were not sufficient to establish a certain level of language competence in students. After the collapse of the Soviet Union exposure to English and other foreign languages increased significantly (Hasanova, 2007, 2016).

According to Hasanova and Shadieva (2008), after the revision of the curriculum in the late 1990s, one of its goals was to gradually move towards CLT. Although there were measures taken by language curriculum developers and foreign language teachers to promote CLT as a modern trend in English language teaching, in fact, teachers used the traditional methods (Hasanova & Shadieva, 2008). The reasons for that, as Hasanova and Shadieva point out, were a "lack of financial support and insufficient teacher training" (p. 139). Thus, CLT remained mainly as a topic of discussion rather than the methodology that should be implemented in EFL classrooms. Since 2013 the teaching of foreign languages was given special attention in Uzbekistani continuous education system, though. Based on that change, foreign languages learning starts in the 1st grade and continues up to the tertiary level (Babniyazova, 2016). To this end, the Decree №1875 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "On measure

of further enhancement of the foreign language teaching system" (Karimov, 2012, December 10) clearly stated that the lessons are carried out through traditional methods of foreign language teaching. Although the objectives were directed toward enhancing learners' communicative competences, the decree failed to make CLT explicit for language curriculum. Based on the decree, the emphasis is put on the question of provision of learning materials such as textbook, workbooks and interactive technology (Karimov, 2012, December 10). In this regard, Babniyazova (2016) questions the teaching of foreign languages in terms of the quality of methodologies and textbooks. She emphasizes that students are not exposed to the development of the verbal vocabulary in English which hinders their ability to produce appropriate language.

As opposed to the vagueness in the decree stated above, Babaniyzova (2016) believes that the present day policy regulations of Uzbekistan state the importance of developing innovative methods of teaching the foreign languages (Babniyzova, 2016). According to her, the President's decree "On measures of further enhancement of the foreign language teaching system" (2012, December 10) draws on the integrated and communication-oriented approaches of teaching and learning. On that basis, Uzbekistani government further established the Unified State Educational Standard for Foreign Languages in the Continuous Education system dated 2013. Similar to Kazakhstan, in Uzbekistan this program takes into account the CEFR framework, therefore, the goals are directed towards cultivating the communicative competencies of students in the polycultural environment (Babniyazova, 2016). In addition, the curricula are built on the basis of the State Educational Standard for Foreign Languages (2013), which allows to learn, teach, and assess the students in accordance with the levelbased criteria. What is more, Babaniyzova (2016) specifically points out that there is a stand-alone section in the State Educational Standard for "Grammar" as it is a crucial aspect of language, but it recommends teaching the grammatical structures and rules in a more communicative approach. Thus, similar to Alamri's (2018) point, the grammar will not be neglected.

However, despite the government's efforts to modernize the teaching approaches for foreign languages, English in particular, there seems to be a controversy in the actual school curricula. Based on the analysis of the yearly program for ELT for the 2017-2018 academic years in Uzbekistani secondary schools, the curriculum seems to contain the same grammar-based approach in a prevailing amount (USBS, 2016). An illustration that proves this statement can be the grammar exercises, text translation, making of sentences and dialogues that are deprived of common contextual background as well as far from the real use of the language This implies that language policy regarding the teaching pedagogies for EFL teaching and learning is still based on the grammar-translation methodology that stemmed from the Soviet period. However, the state program touches upon the urgency of a methodology similar to CLT but does not make it explicit (USBS, 2016). Drawing on that need, the government set the learning outcomes for students in an EFL classroom. According to Hasanova (2016), in Uzbekistan, most secondary schools employ the outdated methodology in teaching and learning English which does not bear any adequate results regarding fluency and readiness to communicate. While EFL in secondary education experiences a lack of policy consideration of CLT, there is a curriculum for the tertiary level education, specifically directed to the training of preschool English language teachers and fellow researchers studying the foreign languages in higher education institutions (Jalalov et al., 2013), who are supposed to achieve the communicative and pragmatic competences in order to be competitive in the labor market (Jalalov et al., 2013). Despite the fact that there is the National Teaching Standards and Curricula (2004) which delineates what is expected to be achieved by EFL learners, the standard divides EFL teaching into two stages (Hasanova, 2016). These stages resemble what Howatt and Widdowson (2004) described as the twofold stages of the grammar-based methodology. According to Hasanova's (2016) those two stages involve, first, exposure on the form of the language including the memorization of the established speech patterns for practice; and, second, the more

comprehensive learning which develops the creative thinking ability. Again, this division can be viewed as a focus on accuracy rather than on fluency and authenticity of language use. From that conclusion can be drawn as there is a possible mismatch in conceptualization of CLT in the policy standard for teaching English.

Conclusion

Both Kazakhstani and Uzbekistani policies regarding the teaching of foreign languages demonstrate not a pedagogical shift itself, instead, they only state the necessity for such methodologies that are based on the Common European Framework recognized worldwide. Even though the policies and general national curricula emphasize the communicationoriented methodology of teaching, local education administrations interpret them in their own way, thus, not paying attention to the skills that are necessary to develop communicative competence. Drawing on the selection of learning language contents in the curriculum, they are mostly based on the topic area adopted from the existing versions of curricula. It is clear that, whenever the shift occurs in the curriculum, there should be alignment with the learning techniques and materials as well. Another point is that, as seen in the policy documents, there is a reference to the communicative approach in teaching, but it is not supported by the relevant theoretical, conceptual, or practical instructions or guidelines in the curriculum. This might be the hindering factor for the implementation of CLT in EFL classes along with the other factors such as lack of financial support and teacher training. Therefore, it can be concluded that CLT is shaped in the official documents but is not practiced appropriately, remaining at the level of discussions and debates.

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