Efficacy of Communication Skills Teaching Methods and Learning Strategies: Enhancing Tertiary Students' Communicative Competence in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study evaluates the efficacy of the methods and strategies used in Communication Skills (CS) course teaching and learning in Tanzania. Specifically, it identifies the methods and strategies used, and examines the appropriateness of the same in upgrading students' CS. The study involved 596 respondents, and data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and group discussions. It is indicated that instructors use varied methods, but questions and answers, web browsing, and library research are perceived the most appropriate. Besides, students also use multiple strategies but group discussions, web browsing, and listening to English conversations are considered the most appropriate. Therefore, instructors are urged to spend some time during students' entry to university to study the incoming students, particularly on how they learn/ behave during the learning process, to accommodate the students' learning differences, difficulties, and preferences when selecting teaching methods. Also, establishing a strict filtering mechanism as an option to improve students' CS, proposed by Rugemalira (2017), is a good proposal. However, currently, it can result in filtering all applicants because many have low language proficiency. Instead, what we need to do meanwhile, is stressing on formalising the use of modern mobile technologies in the teaching since have been revealed to be appropriate.

Key words: *Methods, strategies, efficacy, communicative competence, teaching, and learning*

Introduction

Universities in Tanzania, like many of the English medium universities worldwide, require university entrants to have an adequate level of English language and communicative proficiencies. Good Communication Skills (CS) are key to students' success at college or university. While they are at college or university, students with such skills can adequately participate in lectures and tutorials.[6] Graduates who come out of university with sufficient CS can as well operate successfully at the workplaces. They can correspond very professionally in various official tasks that involve writing such things as reports, emails and formal letters. However, it was realised

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[6] As used above, the word participating means taking notes, asking and answering questions, commenting on something, reading, and doing assignments (including tests and examinations) in both speech and writing.

in the 1970s that the majority of the students who joined colleges and universities in Tanzania had weak communication abilities. Poor communication abilities did not only impede students' effective participation in learning, but also led to their poor academic performance (UDSM, 1983; Mcha & Rea, 1985; Mohamed, 2006). Thus, such students were not able to follow academic instruction very well in the medium of the English language.

After realising the weaknesses in question and the importance of the skills, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), in collaboration with the government, decided to introduce a CS course first at the UDSM in 1978 (Mcha & Rea, 1985; UDSM, 1983). The course aimed at maximising students' English Language Proficiency (ELP) and communication abilities or communicative competence[7] to help them communicate effectively in the English language, succeed academically while at the university, and do better at the workplaces after graduation. Despite the introduction of the course, and the emphasis the government, as well as the colleges/ universities, are putting on it, observations by various scholars (e.g Mohamed, 2006; Komba, 2008; Msuya, 2011) indicate that the problem still persists as many college and university students continue to demonstrate low abilities in communication.

A CS course is not all about the English language. In the Tanzanian context, most of the people confuse CS and English language or learning about the English language. A CS course is a course taught in colleges and universities to help students undertake their studies effectively. Of course, there are may be a module or a few modules on the grammar of the English language, but the main focus is on study skills like academic writing, citation, referencing, developing arguments, paragraph crafting, and oral presentation skills to mention a few. In the country, students are taught English at school, and at the college/ university level, the English language is taught to those who take it at that level. In essence, people confuse a CS course and learning about the English language because the skills of becoming effective in communication (CS) are based in English, since in Tanzania, English is the language of instruction in secondary schools and Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs). Therefore, in our context, English or general English is mainly taught in schools, and

[7] Communicative competence is related to CS. Canale and Swain (1980) define communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skills of how to use language efficiently and appropriately in communication or in all situations. In this study, CS and communicative competence are used interchangeably and communicative competence is understood based on the definition provided by Canale and Swain in 1980.

at the college/university, it is taught to those who take it at that level, but in a CS course, learners are taught English for specific purposes or utility purposes and not about general English.

Various studies such as Jordan (1997), Byrd and Reid (1998), and Palos together with Petrovici (2014) have examined the teaching and learning of CS courses. They report a positive, strong impact of a CS course in boosting CS and academic performance. However, others (e.g Hyland, 1997; Maharsi, 2006; Komba, 2008; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016) show that students still manifest weak communicative competence even after undergoing training in CS. Such studies show that the courses could have a weak positive impact. Generally, on the influence of the CS courses on communication abilities and performance, studies show that there is inconclusiveness in findings.

Several studies have been conducted since the establishment of the CS course (seeMcha& Rea, 1985; Mwalimu, 1998; Komba, 2008; Msuya, 2011). Mcha and Rea (1985), for instance, investigated whether students enrolled for CS at the UDSM would largely improve their language and study skills as compared to those who did not take the course. Mwalimu (1998) focused on the influence of students' attitudes and motivation on the learning of the CS in tertiary institutions in Tanzania. While Komba (2008) assessed the impact of the course on the improvement of communication abilities at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), a few years later, Msuya (2011) evaluated the effectiveness and relevance of CS course for arts and social sciences students at the UDSM. Admittedly, many studies regarding the CS have been conducted, but the CS teaching and learning methods and strategies have been overlooked.

Studies (Soliven, 2003; Giles et al., 2006; Sajjad, 2011; Ayeni, 2011) indicate that students learn and achieve better when teachers use effective instructional strategies, a variety of methods and tools. Giles et al. (2006) and Ayeni (2011) emphasise further that the selection of an appropriate teaching method is one of the most essential processes if one is to have a successful teaching and learning process. In respect to this, the CS course in many countries, including Tanzania, has been taught for many years, to help students improve their ability to communicate effectively in English, but still, observations (Maharsi, 2006; Msuya 2011; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016) show that the course does not bear the expected results, and it is still not well known whether the CS instructors teach their students using appropriate or effective methods and

strategies based on students' preferences. Therefore, this study sought to assess the contribution or the appropriateness of CS courses' teaching methods and learning strategies in enhancing students' communicative competence.

Literature Review

Teaching Methods and Learning Strategies

Many factors influence the success of a teaching and learning process. One of the main factors is the teacher's use of appropriate teaching methods or techniques. A teaching method is an overall plan for a systematic presentation of the subject matter based on a selected approach (Gill & Kasum, 2017), while a technique is a teacher's activity/ activities in the class to involve students in the subject matter. Another main factor is the learner's use of appropriate learning strategies. Learning strategies are activities, efforts, methods, techniques or tools or behaviours exerted by learners, which may be taught or developed by the learners themselves to achieve their objectives of learning. The strategies are essential for language skills learning because they are tools for active and self-directed learning vital in developing communicative competence and greater self-confidence (Oxford, 1990). Therefore, the success of the teaching and learning process, among other factors, depends highly on the teacher's selection of appropriate teaching methods, and learners' use of appropriate learning strategies.

Furthermore, teaching methods are classified differently by different scholars (e.g. Rivers, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Shrum & Glisan, 2009). However, to enrich data handling, this study focuses on two labels, teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches[8]. On the one hand, a teacher-centred approach includes all methods where a teacher dominates the teaching and learning process, and students may sit passively without any real communication. The methods are autocratic in form and allow very little or no room for learners active participation (Kitti, 2014). As a result, they provide little feedback to the teacher as to how effective the teaching has been. On the other hand, a learner-centred approach includes methods which offer

[8] An approach is a broader term than a method; it is an overall view or a way of looking at things or a way of theorising a situation or a problem. According to Gill and Kusum (2017) a teaching approach is a philosophy of how to teach, and it can have many methods within it. It subsumes methods, strategies, techniques, and tools for helping learners learn. Basically, the relationship between an approach, methods and techniques is like that of three layers of an egg. For example, the outer layer of an egg is an approach and after an outer layer of an egg, there are other two layers, the layer next to the outer layer is the methods, while the innermost layer is a technique(s)/strategy(ies).

learners opportunities to be actively engaged in the learning process or using language inside the classroom as in real-life situations.

Literature (e.g Oxford 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Macaro, 2001) also shows that language learning strategies are classified differently by different scholars. However, the classification by Oxford (1990) is considered to be the most comprehensive one, although not without fault. Oxford (1990) divides learning strategies into two major types: direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies attract learner's attention into direct communication with the form and meaning of vocabulary of a target language. Oxford indicates further that, direct strategies are further subdivided into three: memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Memory strategies involve creating mental linkages, applying images and sound, reviewing, and employing actions. Similarly, the cognitive strategies involve practising, analysing and reasoning, while the compensation strategies involve guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing.

Alternatively, indirect strategies help learners learn a language without directly getting involved in the target language. They include metacognitive, affective and social strategies. In particular, metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate or self-direct their learning by planning, setting goals and self-management. Also, affective strategies help learners control their emotions, attitudes and values during the learning process. In contrast, social strategies are behaviour or activities that give learners opportunities to increase interaction or engagement with other people when inside or outside the classrooms. Therefore, direct strategies contribute directly to language learning, while indirect strategies contribute indirectly to language learning and learners may unconsciously be acquiring a language or language skills.

Related Studies

Odubiyi (1988) in Iowa State in America assessed the effectiveness of methods used in the teaching of Agriculture subject in secondary schools. He realised that the problem-solving approach was the most effective teaching method. Demonstration, individualised instruction, lecture-discussion method, field trips, and real-object approaches were also ranked highly in the same study. Many years later, Shinn (1997) conducted a study in the same state involving Agriculture secondary schools teachers. His findings show that the methods and tools used mostly by teachers included demonstrations, discussions, laboratories, projects, real objects, and supervised

experience, but laboratories, demonstrations, contests, real objects, discussion, and supervised experience were perceived to be the most effective methods and tools.

Additionally, Kitti (2014) realised that questions and answers was perceived the most effective technique used in secondary schools in Tanzania in teaching science subjects. The technique was followed by methods such as demonstration, brainstorming, and group work which were deemed effective. Also, Wong (2015) related teaching and learning styles preference in CS classrooms and found that the community college students in Hong Kong had multiple learning style preferences. Furthermore, it was shown that factors such as cultural and educational backgrounds are related to students' development of learning styles. In the recent, Talley (2017) at Carson-Newman University in America examined the most effective teaching strategies to meet the needs of struggling readers. The findings of her study reflected that games, group work, high-interest texts, and plays or poetry influenced struggling readers to engage in the process of reading.

Other related studies were conducted by Pratiwi (2015) and Noviyenty (2018). Pratiwi (2015) analysed classroom techniques for developing students' English writing skills at Muhammadiyah University in Indonesia. The findings indicate that teachers used techniques such as writing based on a picture, writing based on a template, writing a card, dictation, writing based on a topic, fill in the blank, and writing based on jumbled words or sentences to develop students' English writing skill. Also, in the recent, at SMAN 1 Curup high school in Indonesia, Noviyenty (2018) assessed strategies for learning and techniques for teaching English speaking. The findings indicate that the strategies used by students in learning to speak English were classified into metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, social strategies, and affective strategies. On the contrary, the English teachers in teaching used techniques such as role-play, group presentation, group discussion, speech competition, dialogues, direct correction, speaking in group, debate competition, games, and listening to English songs.

Generally, the review of the literature shows that it is possible what has been realised to be the best learning strategies or teaching methods in one context, to be the worst in the other context. Also, it has shown that teacher's selection of appropriate teaching methods and strategies is one of the most important processes to have a successful teaching and learning process. However, there is limited

research analysing teaching methods and learning strategies, particularly in the CS programme. Again, with particular reference to Tanzania, studies show that CS courses offered at colleges/universities to upgrade students' communication competence have largely not borne the desired results (see Mcha & Rea, 1985; Komba, 2008; Msuya, 2011), and there is no noticeable study that has explicitly evaluated the contribution of teaching methods and learning strategies in the promotion of students' communication competence. Therefore, specifically, this study aimed first, analysing methods and strategies used in the teaching and learning of CS courses in four universities in Tanzania, and second, assessing the efficacy of the same in upgrading tertiary students' communication competence.

Methodology

Study Area, Design, Sampling, and Sample Size

The study was conducted in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Kilimanjaro and Iringa regions involving the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), Mwenge Catholic University (MWECAU), and University of Iringa (UoI) respectively. These universities were selected purposively because first, they offer or teach the CS courses in question. The CS courses in focus were those taught to the Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts/Social Sciences and Humanities undergraduate students. Second, all the selected universities had a considerable number of students enrolled in different specialisations, so the researcher was in a better position of getting the needed data. Therefore, the selected universities were justifiably a representative in the assessment of the contributions of the CS courses teaching methods and learning strategies in upgrading students' communication abilities in Tanzania.

The study involved students and lecturers, both of which were purposively selected. The students were the first-year undergraduate students of the 2018/2019 academic year. In the 2018/2019 academic year, the four selected universities enrolled a total of 20,254 students (TCU, 2018). Thus, a sample size of 584 was obtained after running through online sample size calculator software based on Cochran's (1977) formula. From each university, 146 students together with 3 lecturers were selected. Thus, the total sample size for both students and lecturers was 596. Of the 596 involved respondents, 12 (2.0%) were the CS instructors and 584 (98.0%) were students. In particular, the involved instructors and students were both male and female. Also, the 12 (2.0%) instructors were of varied age and education level. There were those of a doctoral degree, a master's

degree and PhD candidates. Furthermore, the study used a mixed-methods design. The design combines quantitative and qualitative research data in the same study. Creswell (2014) notes that, when both data are collected, quantitative methods are used to collect and analyse data, while qualitative methods are used to further strengthen the quantitative methods. As such, the findings from qualitative data were interpreted to enhance, expand, illustrate, or clarify findings derived from quantitative data.

Procedures

Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The questionnaires were for both students and instructors, and they assessed the extent of use and appropriateness of each method/strategy in boosting students' CS. The questionnaires involved Likert scales and the rating scale for the extent of use was as follows: *1= not used, 2= rarely used, 3= sometimes used, 4= frequently used, and 5= most frequently used*, At the same time, that for appropriateness was graduated as follows: *1= not appropriate, 2= of little appropriateness, 3= somewhat appropriate, 4= appropriate and 5= very appropriate*. Also, there was a follow-up of individual instructors' interviews and FGDs for students, to draw upon their deep understanding and reactions towards the methods and strategies.

Qualitative data (from FGDs & interviews) were taken to support findings from quantitative data. Thus, the qualitative data relating to quantitative findings were presented in narrations to support findings from quantitative data. In contrast, the quantitative data from the questionnaires were subjected to a Statistical Package for Social Science to analyse descriptive statistics such as summation, frequencies of distribution, mean and percentages.

Analysis and Results

Strategies Used in Studying the CS Courses

Table 1 shows that students use multiple strategies in studying CS courses. It is shown that the majority of the direct strategies such as CS independent study, memorising English/CS phrases, peer to peer CS teaching after classes were perceived to be *frequently used* strategies in studying CS courses in the surveyed universities. In addition, Google search engine was perceived to be used *most frequently*, while listening to audio CS books/e-books or reading aloud CS books and joining CS clubs were considered *not used* at all.

Table1: Strategies Used by Students in Studying the CS Courses

S/N	Techniques and Strategies	The extent of Use (N=584)				
		Not used (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Frequently (%)	Most Frequently (%)
Direct strategies	Google engine searching English vocabulary & other CS resources	16(2.7)	36(6.2)	96(16.4)	180(30.8)	**256(43.8)**
	Practicing new vocabulary each day	58(9.9)	119(20.4)	**242(41.4)**	112(19.2)	53(9.1)
	CS independent study	6(1.0)	40(6.8)	103(17.6)	**225(38.5)**	210(36.1)
	Memorising English words/ CS phrases	41(7.0)	75(12.8)	182(31.2)	**201(34.4)**	85(14.6)
	Listening audio CS books/e-books or reading aloud CS books	**148(25.3)**	87(14.9)	145(24.8)	145(24.8)	59(10.1)
	Peer to peer teaching CS after classes	67(11.5)	60(10.3)	168(28.8)	**187(32.0)**	102(17.5)
	Joining for an English or CS Clubs	**185(31.7)**	163(27.9)	146(25.0)	75(12.8)	15(2.6)
	Recording my CS presentation and presenting to peers	116(19.9)	152(26.0)	**158(27.1)**	108(18.5)	50(8.6)
Indirect strategies	Group discussions	5(0.9)	21(3.6)	74(12.7)	**246(42.0)**	238(40.8)
	Social Networking Sites: FB, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, etc	65(11.2)	73(12.5)	**197(33.7)**	159(27.2)	90(15.4)
	Chatting in English with a friend	60(10.3)	111(19.0)	**220(37.7)**	127(21.7)	66(11.3)
	Singing /listening English songs	51(8.7)	59(10.1)	163(27.9)	**172(29.5)**	139(23.8)
	Reading English newspapers(the Citizen, Business times the Guardian), magazines and novels	139(23.8)	138(23.6)	**182(31.2)**	84(14.4)	41(7.0)
	Watching frequently English films/videos	71(12.2)	83(14.2)	**202(34.6)**	110(18.8)	118(20.2)
	Listening to English radio &TV(e.g Capital, VoA BBC, CNN, Skynews, etc)	70(12.0)	108(18.5)	**198(33.9)**	123(21.1)	85(14.6)
	Chatting with a friend in English via Skype/ messaging	75(12.8)	65(11.1)	**201(34.4)**	150(25.7)	93(15.9)
	Attending speaking contests	58(9.9)	**182(31.2)**	119(20.4)	155(26.5)	70(12.0)
	When outside the class, being the 1st one saying hello in English	75(12.8)	96(16.4)	**180(30.8)**	146(25.0)	87(14.9)
	Listening to English conversations	45(7.7)	57(9.8)	159(27.2)	**208(35.6)**	115(19.7)
	Writing commentaries about anything of their favourite	**225(38.5)**	170(29.1)	128(21.9)	49(8.4)	12(2.1)

Alternatively, the majority of the indirect strategies such as group discussions, Social Networking Sites (SNSs) such as You-Tube, Facebook and Twitter, reading English newspapers, magazines and novels, chatting in English, and watching English films/movies and listening to English radio and television stations such as Capital, VoA, BBC, CNN and Skynews were considered to be *sometime used*, while writing commentaries about anything of their favourite was rated as *not used*.

Appropriateness of Students' Strategies

Table 2: Appropriateness of the Strategies Used in CS Learning

S/N	Techniques and Strategies	Extent of Appropriateness of Students' Strategies(N=584)				
		Not appropriate (%)	Of little appropriateness (%)	Somewhat appropriate (%)	Appropriate (%)	Very appropriate (%)
Direct strategies	Google engine searching English vocabulary & other CS resources	23(3.9)	33(5.7)	95(16.3)	182(31.2)	**251(43.0)**
	Practicing new vocabulary each day	51(8.7)	110(18.8)	**194(33.2)**	163(27.9)	66(11.3)
	CS independent study	18(3.1)	47(8.0)	98(16.8)	**246(42.1)**	175(30.0)
	Memorising English words/ CS phrases	43(7.4)	61(10.4)	176(30.2)	**214(36.6)**	90(15.4)
	Listening to audio CS books/e-books or reading aloud CS books	**154(26.4)**	68(11.6)	138(23.6)	142(24.4)	82(14.0)
	Peer to peer teaching CS after classes	75(12.8)	63(10.8)	151(25.9)	**191(32.7)**	104(17.8)
	Joining for an English / CS Clubs	**209(35.8)**	112(19.2)	154(26.3)	77(13.2)	32(5.5)
	Recording my CS presentation and presenting to peers	98(16.8)	112(19.2)	**172(29.5)**	132(22.6)	70(12.0)
Indirect strategies	Group discussions	11(1.9)	25(4.3)	65(11.1)	225(38.5)	**258(44.2)**
	Social Networking Sites: FB, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, etc	89(15.2)	76(13.0)	165(28.3)	**176(30.1)**	78(13.4)
	Chatting in English with a friend	71(12.2)	91(15.6)	**190(32.5)**	145(24.8)	87(14.9)
	Singing /listening English songs	54(9.2)	53(9.1)	154(26.4)	**189(32.4)**	134(22.9)
	Reading English newspapers(the Citizen, Business times the Guardian), magazines and novels	142(24.3)	101(17.3)	**173(29.6)**	127(21.7)	41(7.0)
	Watching frequently English films/movies	73(12.5)	76(13.0)	151(25.9)	**175(30.0)**	109(18.7)
	Listening / watching English radio &TV stations	75(12.8)	104(17.8)	**171(29.3)**	152(26.0)	82(14.0)
	Chatting with a friend in English via Skype/ messaging					
	Attending speaking contests	59(10.1)	72(12.3)	**212(36.3)**	150(25.7)	91(15.6)
	When outside the class, being the 1st one saying hello in English	84(14.4)	76(13.0)	**187(32.0)**	137(23.5)	100(17.1)
	Listening to English conversation	35(6.0)	53(9.1)	152(26.0)	160(27.4)	**184(31.5)**
	Writing commentaries about anything of their favourite	**193(33.0)**	143(24.5)	122(20.9)	93(15.9)	33(5.7)

Table 2 shows that the majority of the direct strategies such as CS independent study, memorising English words/CS phrases and peer to peer CS teaching were perceived by students to be *appropriate* for CS learning. Moreover, browsing for CS resources through Google engine was considered the *most appropriate*, while listening to audio CS books or e-books and joining CS clubs were deemed *not appropriate* because they are not used at all.

Furthermore, the majority of the indirect strategies such as chatting in English, reading newspapers, magazines and novels, listening to radio and watching TV stations respectively, attending speaking contests, and when outside the class being the first one saying hello to a friend were perceived to be *somewhat appropriate* in influencing students' communication competence. Besides, group discussions and listening to English conversions were considered to be the *most appropriate* strategies. Generally, considering all strategies used by students in studying CS, the perceptions of students show that browsing CS resources through Google engine, group discussions and listening to English language conversions were the strategies considered to be the *most appropriate* in influencing students' CS.

Instructor's Teaching Methods and Tools

The Extent of Using the Methods and Tools

Table 3 shows that instructors used varieties of methods and tools in the teaching of the CS courses in the four surveyed universities. Furthermore, among the Teacher Centred Methods (TCMs), it is only the lecture method that was perceived to be the *most frequently used*, followed by demonstration and coaching/tutoring, which were considered to be *frequently used*.

Table 3: Instructors' Extent of Use of the Methods

Techniques and Tools by Instructors		Frequency of Use (N=12)				
		Not Used (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometime (%)	Frequently (%)	Most Frequently (%)
Teacher- centred methods(TCMs)	Demonstration	0(0.0)	2(16.7)	4(33.3)	**5(41.7)**	1(8.3)
	Lecture method	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	5(41.7)	**6(50.0)**
	Invitation of a guest speaker	**8(66.7)**	2(16.7)	2(16.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Coaching/ tutorials	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	5(41.7)	**6(50.0)**	1(8.3)
	Team teaching by a panel of instructors	4(33.3)	**6(50.0)**	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	1(8.3)
	Individualised instruction	1(8.3)	4(33.3)	**5(41.7)**	1(8.3)	1(8.3)
	Lecture–discussion	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	**6(50.0)**	3(25.0)	3(25.0)
Students/Learner-centred methods (SCMs)	Blended teaching/use of SNSs	**7(58.3)**	2(16.7)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)
	Oral reports	0(0.0)	3(25.0)	**5(41.7)**	2(16.7)	2(16.7)
	Class projects	3(25.0)	3(25.0)	**5(41.7)**	1(8.3)	0(0.0)
	Group work	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(16.7)	**8(66.7)**	2(16.7)
	Questions and answers	1(8.3)	4(33.3)	2(16.2)	2(16.7)	**5(41.7)**
	Conducting interviews	3(25.0)	**4(33.3)**	3(25.0)	0(0.0)	2(16.7)
	Vocabulary lists /	2(16.7)	2(16.7)	**5(41.7)**	1(8.3)	2(16.7)

	drills					
	Brainstorming	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(33.3)	3(25.0)	**5(41.7)**
	Distance instruction	**7(58.3)**	3(25.0)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	0(0.0)
	Class assignment & homework	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	**8(66.7)**	3(25.0)
	Problem-solving approaches	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	**6(50.0)**	4(33.3)	0.(0.0)
	Teaching by debates	1(8.3)	**8(66.7)**	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	2(16.7)
	Storytelling	0(0.0)	2(16.7)	**6(50.0)**	3(25.0)	1(8.3)
	Individual project works	**5(41.7)**	3(25.0)	3(25.0)	1(8.3)	0(0.0)
	Using objects/ Authentic materials	1(8.3)	2(16.7)	**5(41.7)**	3(25)	1(8.3)
	Seminar presentations	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	2(16.7)	4(33.3)	**5(41.7)**
	Role play and drama	**4(33.3)**	3(25.0)	2(16.7)	1(8.3)	2(16.7)
	Library research	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	2(16.7)	**6(50.0)**	3(25.0)
	Gaming and simulation	4(33.3)	**6(50.0)**	2(16.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Required term paper	1(8.3)	**4(33.3)**	2(16.7)	3(25.0)	2(16.7)
	Supervised study	1(8.3)	2(16.7)	**6(50.0)**	2(16.7)	1(8.3)
	Students writing commentaries	2(16.7)	**4(33.3)**	3(25.0)	1(8.3)	2(16.7)
Teaching Tools/aids	Using television (TV)	**9(75.0)**	2(16.7)	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	0.(0.0)
	Using radio/radio programmes	**8(66.7)**	2(16.7)	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)
	Playing Films & Movies	**8(66.7)**	2(16.7)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	0(0.0)
	Moodle	**10(83.3)**		2(16.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Chalkboard/Clipboard	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3(25.0)	**7(58.3)**	2(16.7)
	Google engine / Web browsing	1(8.3)	2(16.7)	2(16.7)	**4(33.3)**	3(25.0)
	Computer software	3(25.0)	**4(33.3)**	3(25.0)	0(0.0)	2(16.7)
	Projector/ Slides	4(33.3)	0(0.0)	**5(41.7)**	1(8.3)	2(16.7)

Other TCMs such as individualised instruction and lecture-discussion were considered *sometimes used,* whereas few others were considered to be either *rarely used* or *not used* at all in the teaching of the CS. The lecturing method was the most preferred by many of the instructors may be because the method is an efficient way of delivering a substantial amount of information to a large group of learners in a short time. Furthermore, the findings, particularly on the lecturing method, are consistent with Tunc (2010), who realised that the most used type of instructional method in language teaching was the lecturing method. However, other methods such as eliciting, group work, and presentation were also stated as used often in classes.

Also, the majority of the Students-Centred Methods (SCMs) were perceived to be used *sometimes* by the CS instructors in the teaching

of the CS courses, while at the same time many of the SCMs were *not used*. It is only questions and answers, brainstorming and seminar presentations methods which were considered to be used *most frequently*, followed by class assignments, group work and library research which were considered *frequently used*. The instructors preferred, for example, questions and answers together with brainstorming *most frequently* may be because questions and answers strategy helps in motivating learners' curiosity about the lesson. Again, it helps in assessing students' understanding when teaching takes place, while brainstorming strategy was preferred may be because it stimulates students' involvement and creativity.

About teaching toots/aids, it is shown that the majority of the teaching tools were not used in the teaching of the CS courses. It has been realised further that Google search engine and chalkboard were considered to be *used frequently* in the teaching of the CS courses, followed by a projector which was considered to be *sometime used*, while other teaching tools were considered to be either *rarely* or *not used* at all.

Appropriateness of the Methods and Tools Used by Instructors

Table 4 shows that instructors use varieties of methods and tools during the teaching and learning process of the courses, and the methods and tools do not have the same effect. The table indicates that TCMs such as demonstration, lecturing and lecture-discussion methods were considered to be *appropriate*, followed by individualised instruction and tutoring, which were *sometime appropriate*, while other TCMs were rated to be *not appropriate* because they were rarely used or not used at all.

Table 4: Instructors' Appropriateness of their Methods and Tools

Methods/Techniques and Tools		Instructors' Appropriateness of their Methods& Tools (N=12)				
		Not appropriate (%)	Of little appropria-teness (%)	Somewhat appropriate (%)	Appropriate (%)	Very appropriate (%)
Teacher-Centred Methods(TCMs)	Demonstration	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	2(16.7)	**6(50.0)**	3(25.0)
	Lecture method	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	5(41.7)	**6(50.0)**	0(0.0)
	Instructors team teaching	**4(33.3)**	2(16.7)	3(25.0)	2(16.7)	1(8.3)
	Individualised instruction	1(8.3)	2(16.7)	**4(33.3)**	3(25.0)	2(16.7)
	Coaching/ tutorials	2(16.7)	0(0.0)	**3(25.0)**	7(58.3)	0(0.0)
	Lecture–discussion	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(16.7)	**6(50.0)**	4(33.3)
Student-centred methods/ (SCMs)	Assignment & homework	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	**6(50.0)**	5(41.7)
	Class projects	3(25.0)	3(25.0)	**5(41.7)**	1(8.3)	0(0.0)
	Gaming and Simulation	1(8.7)	3(25.0)	**6(50.0)**	2(16.7)	0(0.0)
	Brainstorming	2(16.7)	0(0.0)	2(16.7)	**6(50.0)**	2(16.7)

	Storytelling	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	**4(33.3)**	6(50.0)	1(8.3)
	Problem-solving approaches	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	**9(75.0)**	0(0.0)
	Conducting interviews	5(41.7)	3(25.0)	**3(25.0)**	0(0.0)	1(8.3)
	Library method	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	3(25.0)	0(0.0)	**8(66.7)**
	Storytelling	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	**4(33.3)**	6(50.0)	1(8.3)
	Required term paper	2(16.7)	4(33.3	**5(41.7)**	1(8.3)	0(0.0)
	Vocabulary lists & drills	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	**9(75.0)**	1(8.3)	1(8.3)
	Supervised study	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	**5(41.7)**	4(33.3)	2(16.7)
	Seminar presentations	1(8.3)	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	**6(50.0)**	4(33.3)
	Oral reports	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	**7(58.3)**	2(16.7)	1(8.3)
	Group work	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(16.7)	**6(50)**	4(33.3)
	Questions and answers	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(33.3)	3(25.0)	**5(41.7)**
	Students writing commentaries	3(25)	0(0.0)	**2(16.7)**	5(41.7)	2(16.7)
Tools	Using objects/ Authentic materials	1(8.3)	4(33.3)	0(0.0)	**5(41.7)**	2(16.7)
	Chalkboard /Clipboard	0(0.0)	1(8.3)	2(16.7)	**6(50.0)**	3(25.0
	Google engine /Web browsing	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	3(25.0)	2(16.7)	**5(41.7)**
	Computer software	4(33.3)	0(0.0)	**5(41.7)**	3(25.0)	0(0.0)
	Projector/ Slides	3(25.0)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	**6(50.0)**	1(8.3)

Furthermore, it has been realised that the majority of the SCMs were perceived to be *sometime appropriate*. At the same time, it is only the library study and questions and answers methods which were considered to be *very appropriate*, followed by brainstorming, problem-solving, seminar presentation and group work which were considered to be *appropriate*. Equally, about teaching tools, it has been realised that the instructors perceived Google search engine to be the *most appropriate* followed by authentic materials, chalkboard and projector which were rated as *appropriate*, while other tools were either considered *sometime appropriate* or *not appropriate*.

Discussion

The findings of the study show that both instructors of the course and students use multiple methods and strategies in the teaching and learning of the course respectively. The findings imply that the effectiveness of the course is a function of several methods and strategies. Such an argument is supported by other scholars such as J-Ping and Collis (1995) as well as Faraday et al. (2011) who also emphasise using at least more than one method. Thus, the effectiveness of the CS courses teaching and learning is attained when more than one method and strategy are used together.

It has been realised that the majority of the SCMs such as interviews, team paper, games and simulations, projects, vocabulary

drills, and class projects were perceived to be somewhat appropriate. SCMs are highly advocated to be the best strategies in enhancing a teaching and learning process, unlike the TCMs because SCMs have high students' engagement, but based on the findings of this study most of the SCMs were not considered to be appropriate or very effective in boosting students CS. First, it might be because of not using the methods accordingly. Of course, in the teaching, the instructors used SCMs, but were they used appropriately? The SCMs(Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods in case of language skills) for them to enhance students' communication competence or foster positive results, they need to be used or conducted properly following procedures of applying them effectively. Thus, it is not well known, whether the instructors in using the methods followed proper procedures or not. Next, it might be because the SCMs need enough time, students' engagement, enough human and material resources to mention a few. Scholars such as Blatchford et al. (2005) and Benbow et al. (2007) report that high-class size affects students' practices, instructional time and classroom management. CS classes in the surveyed universities were of high class size. Due to this, it seems that most of the instructors had limited material resources, time for students' practices, and were challenged in managing classes interactively. As a result, many of them still leaned on the TCMs. Therefore, relying much on the TCMs makes SCMs not very appropriate in enhancing students' language skills as realised in this study.

Generally, the majority of TCMs such as demonstration, lecturing method and lecture-discussion as well as tools such as projectors and blackboards were considered to be appropriate. Contrary to the findings by Sajjad (2011) in Pakistan, particularly on the lecturing method, the lecturing method was rated the best teaching method at the HLIs. It may be surprising how a lecturing method, which is a TCM, can be the best approach. During FGDs, when students were asked (in the current study), why they consider a lecture method to be appropriate in enhancing their CS; one of the students said:

> *It is effective because it saves time. You know when we do teamwork, discussions and oral presentations, we're wasting a lot of time, so we prefer our lecturer to lecture and then from there we go and make discussions on our own outside the class.* [Quotation1]

It seems students feel free to make discussions outside the class and not when they are in the class. Logically, if SCMs or participatory

methods such as teamwork and discussions waste time when used in the class, ideally they do the same when they are used outside the class. In this regard, it seems many students prefer the lecturing method because they do not want or they fear to interact with others in the class. In essence, effective teaching of the language skills needs enough interaction, and that can be attained through participatory approaches. As such, a lecturing method can be considered the best, even if it is not very appropriate for CS teaching only because students dislike participatory approaches.

Similarly, the finding on questions and answers together with brainstorming, demonstration and group works techniques concurs with Kitti (2014). Kitti shows that questions and answers was the most effective technique in the teaching of science subjects in secondary schools in Tanzania, followed by demonstration, group works and brainstorming techniques. The concurrence in findings should not insinuate that effective techniques for science subjects/courses are also appropriate for CS courses. First, this is because language skills are taught differently from how the science subjects/courses are taught. However, some techniques may appear to be similar. Second, it is because what has been realised to be the best teaching approach in one context or subject may be the worst in the other because of the nature of learners and the subject matter taught.

More importantly, interviews and FGDs have indicated that CS instructors tend to rely excessively on the TCMs due to factors such as high-class size, shortage of time and instructors, and detailedness of the subject matter. Thus, overreliance on the TCMs which are considered by many educationists to be not very effective at enhancing the teaching and learning process can contribute to making the course fail to produce desired outcomes. Overreliance is reflected in this study when one instructor said:

> *... The only problem that makes the course not to help much students, I think is a large -class size. We normally teach large classes. I sometimes teach a class of more than 300 students. Just imagine how do you make such a class participatory or interactive? In such a situation, you only resort to lecturing*. [Quotation 2]

At this point, it is worth noting that, the results show that the majority of the methods and strategies used are appropriate in boosting students' CS. This indicates that the infectiveness of the

course in producing desired outcomes on upgrading students' communication competence is mainly attributed to other factors apart from the course teaching methods and learning strategies. During FGD and interviews with the respondents, several reasons such as low students' ELP(Quotation3), political factor/lecturers compromising with students' deficiencies(Quotation4), low students' autonomous learning(Quotation5), lack of time for practices and high-class size(Quotation2), to mention a few, were highlighted as the factors hindering the course, as reflected in the following quotations:

> *Even if grammar has been removed from the course, at some insistences, I still teach it because I see some of my students still struggle much with the grammar of English.* [Quotation 3, instructor]

> *Frankly speaking*, *if we become strict almost all the students will fall, and if that happens, you will be asked, what are you doing? Or a task force will be formed to investigate…* [Quotation 4, instructor]

> *I think there is a problem with self-learning; students depend much on the teachers, so they don't take self-efforts …* [Quotation 5, student]

Furthermore, the findings of the study have shown that modern technological applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and You-Tube are considered to be appropriate, while a Google search engine is perceived to be very appropriate at improving students' CS. To day, in Tanzania, Google search engine has risen to be the largest source of knowledge, unlike a few decades ago, when university students and their instructors depended highly on printed sources from libraries. Google engine has many sites indexed to it, so its users have a better chance of getting varieties of information in a very short time. This might be the reason, why both instructors and students in the surveyed universities perceive Google search engine to be the most appropriate or effective strategy.

Based on the findings reflected in this study on the use of modern technological tools, Tanzania needs to formalise the use of SNSs in HILs to foster students CS. Rugemalira (2017) offers two policy recommendations to improve the teaching and learning of CS courses in higher education in Tanzania. One of the options is the establishment of a radical strict filtering system to exclude applicants with weak ELP. The establishment of a strict filtering

mechanism is a good proposal, but currently, it can result in filtering all applicants because it is evident from previous studies (Mohamed, 2006; Komba, 2008; Msuya, 2011) that at the entry point, most students have very weak ELP. Instead, what we need to do meanwhile, is stressing on formalising the use of SNSs since are currently readily available to many students in universities. Also, as reflected in this study, presently many students use them frequently in accessing different learning materials. Besides, there are other recent studies, which report positive results on the use of the applications in the enhancement of students' language skills and performance (see Oluwalanu et al., 2014; Fattah, 2015; Lahiry et al., 2019).

Today in many countries, SNSs have gained an official use in education (Eke et al, 2014; Ferreira et al., 2015; Lahiry et al., 2019). In Nigeria, for example, Eke et al. (2014) report that almost all students are using the SNSs in interaction with friends, for online study, discussing serious national issues, and watching movies. In Tanzania, SNSs are now an integral part of university students' life; their use in education is only informal. Students use them mainly for social purposes like sharing news, information, messaging and chatting as well as keeping in touch with friends and family members (Ishengoma & Mtaho, 2014). Therefore, although in many countries globally, SNSs have received formal acceptance in higher education, still there are many countries, Tanzania included, where SNSs still maintain informal usage.

Practically, higher education teaching has evolved globally over the last twenty years, with more emphasis on student-centred pedagogy (Nkatha et al., 2015). Due to this, expectations are placed more on modern mobile technology to supplement normal classes in the form of online classes. More importantly, changes that have been brought today by the recent pandemic, COVID-19 necessitate many universities in developing countries, to go for online classes or to blend their teaching and learning process with SNSs. For example, during the outbreak of the pandemic, in Tanzania, some private schools informally opted for a WhatsApp tool as a learning platform alternative to regular schooling. In Uganda, Thomson (2020) reports that the government decided to prepare a digital e-learning programme to facilitate homeschooling for children due to the closure of schools following the outbreak of the pandemic. Thus, all these changes unlock the need for SNSs to be formally blended with classroom teaching and learning strategies in higher education.

Furthermore, e-books are currently an important part of higher education. The results on the use of e-books show that reading CS e-books or listening to audio books was perceived to be not an appropriate strategy or not used. At the same time, using Google search engine in browsing for different CS learning resources was considered to be very appropriate. First, this may be because the students are not aware that they can also search for e-books or audio-books through their smartphones. Next, it might be because most of the good e-books require one to pay to get to read or download. Also, it might be because of the low reading culture existing among Tanzanians. Based on my experience as a lecturer, in universities in Tanzania, even if students are given a list of books to read, very few will read, while the majority will keep relyingheavily on notes or handouts provided by their instructors. This may be attributed to the low reading culture that exists in the community. All these factors can make students fail to read e-books or listen to audio-books as reflected in the current study. This finding is consistent with the findings by Wood et al. (2010) and Tosun (2014) who report that students and teachers do not read e-books because e-books cost more than printed one, insufficient knowledge on how to read e-books, to protect their eyes from infection, and preferring holding a book on their hands and getting more pleasure when reading printed books.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper sought to evaluate the efficacy of the CS course teaching methods and learning strategies. It has been revealed that CS lecturers and students use varieties of methods and strategies. The use of multiple methods and strategies implies that the effectiveness of the course is a function of several methods and strategies. It has been revealed further that, CS instructors perceive methods such as questions and answers, web browsing, and library research as the most appropriate for teaching the courses, followed by techniques such as demonstration, group works, assignments, lecture-discussion, brainstorming, problem-solving, seminar presentation and storytelling. Additionally, it has been indicated that students consider strategies such as group discussion, web browsing, and listening to English conversations as the most appropriate, followed by strategies such as SNSs, independent study, watching English movies, peer to peer teaching and memorising English words. Therefore, the findings of this study help both instructors and students to know which methods and strategies work best for both

them, as a result, this helps them in making rational decisions geared at improving the teaching and learning of the course.

Based on these findings, I recommend instructors of the course to spend some time during students' entry to university to study the incoming students particularly on how they learn or behave during the learning process. This will help to accommodate students' learning differences, difficulties and preferences when selecting teaching methods. Also, establishing a strict filtering mechanism so as to improve students' CS, as proposed by Rugemalira (2017), is a good option. However, it can lead to filtering all applicants since many at entry to university have low ELP. Instead, what we need to do meanwhile is to emphasise on the use of SNSs in HLIs because first, as earlier noted, they have been reported by several other studies to be effective, in the promotion of language skills. Second, they are currently readily available to many university students in the country. Lastly, students have already started using them informally in accessing different learning materials. Thus, blending them formally with classroom teaching methods in the CS courses teaching will be the best option to encourage students' autonomous learning and to minimise the problem of low students' engagement. Also, in our contexts, where the classroom environment constrains instructors to over-rely on a lecturing method, the method can be used with multiple techniques such as series of short lectures followed by exercises, and intersperse short readings or videos; additionally, students can briefly discuss points in groups or write a reaction to an issue during the lecture, to make it very effective.

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