Authentic Instructional Materials and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach of German as Foreign Language in Uganda

Christopher B. Mugimu
Makerere University, Department of Foundations and Curriculum Studies, Kampala, Uganda

Samuel Sekiziyivu
Makerere University, Department of Humanities and Language Education, Kampala, Uganda

Abstract. The communicative language teaching (CLT) approach has in recent years gained popularity in promoting communication competences in everyday situations. The CLT approach emphasizes the use of authentic materials in the teaching and learning of languages. However, in developing context such as Uganda, the requirements of the CLT approach may not be easily achievable due to scarcity of suitable authentic instructional materials. This study was intended to establish the availability and suitability of authentic instructional materials used in the implementation of CLT approach for German language in Uganda. Data was collected using a cross-sectional case study, which was carried out in selected secondary schools. Results from questionnaires, interviews and observations, showed that most of the existing instructional materials were not suitable for CLT. It was therefore recommended that teachers become more creative in improvising locally available instructional materials in order to promote the teaching of German in everyday life, and that teacher training institutions should lay more emphasis on preparing teacher trainees of German in CLT approach.

Keywords: Authentic instructional materials; Communicative Language Teaching; German language; Uganda

Introduction

The communicative language teaching (CLT) approach has in recent years gained popularity because of its strength in enabling learners acquire the language skills needed in real-life situations. Communicative language Teaching (CLT) is based on the concept of communicative competence by which learners of a language are expected to possess the ability to understand a foreign language and be able to use that language for purposes of effective communication (Sekiziyivu & Mugimu, 2015). However, in order for learners to learn to use a language in real-life situations, the classroom learning environment has to be organized in such a way that it closely reflects, as much as possible, the real-life situation outside the classroom. This can be achieved by utilization of authentic instructional materials.

Different scholars understand authentic materials differently. For instance, Tomlinson (2012, p. 163) asserts that "an authentic text is one that is produced in order to communicate rather to teach. And an authentic task is one which involves the learners in communication in order to achieve an outcome, rather than practice the language." As such, authentic instructional materials are such materials which may not have been specifically designed for classroom use, but for use in real-life situations. In the case of CLT, such materials are obtained from the real life environment, and brought into the classroom without necessarily making any modifications. They may include, among others, newspapers, restaurant menus, recipes, maps, reports, and instructional manuals (Sekiziyivu & Mugimu, 2015). In addition to the use of authentic instructional materials, the teacher in a CLT classroom has to design tasks and activities that also reflect the actual use of language in real-life situations. For instance, such tasks that may involve learners into exchange of ideas through interaction, like group work, and pair work, are desirable in CLT. Thus, authentic instructional materials boost the teaching strategies and promote learners' active language production.

What makes instructional materials authentic?

Different scholars have endeavoured to explain what makes instructional materials authentic (Harmer, 1991; Jordan, 1997; Morrow, 1977; D. Nunan, 1989; D. Nunan, 1991 ; Taylor, 1994). These scholars contend that authentic instructional materials are resources that closely reflect real life situation in any given context. A critical analysis of their work reveals that the availability and use of authentic instructional materials in classrooms is not something that needs to be taken for granted. It takes creativity of the teacher to select and use suitable authentic instructional materials for specific class activities that can enhance meaningful language outcomes (Sekiziyivu & Mugimu, 2015). This is so because authentic instructional materials by their nature may not be readily available for classroom use and the teacher has to move an extra mile in his/her

lesson preparations in order to have relevant authentic instructional materials brought from the real-life language community to the classroom. However, in case the teacher cannot obtain the actual authentic instructional materials into the classroom, an effort to imitate real-life situations could be the preferred option that could offer an added advantage. As cited by Jian (2005, p. 29);

> In order to achieve authenticity, listening materials should be based on real situations, in which readers don't merely read out materials, they also act out the dialogues with rich intonations and tones. To imitate the authentic communicative situations, some background sounds can be added, since in real-life we cannot avoid disturbances or noise. And all materials are spoken with natural speed and accent, which will help learners understand conversations in real communication that will not be slowed down on purpose.

According to (Jian, 2005), texts meant for classroom language teaching should in effect not be moderated to fit the different levels of language learning, but they should be used in their natural form. This, however, creates a challenge in the case of beginning German language learners in Uganda, who will find the comprehension of such texts very difficult.

Similarly, Marcella (1998, p. 7) gives the following characteristics of authentic instructional materials for a communicative classroom:

- The materials are learner-centred and carter for the needs and interests of the student.
- The texts place greater emphasis on the social function of the communication than on grammatical correctness. In other words, the language activities in the texts lead to free communication.
- The texts provide practice with natural and meaningful communication.
- The texts enhance real life language practice.
- The texts allow for a great deal of learners' interaction, for example group work and pair work, role plays, problem solving tasks.
- The texts are usually accompanied by tapes for listening.

Marcella's study further reveals the complexity of developing and using authentic instructional materials in the classroom. This is so because bringing the real life scenarios of German language use into the Ugandan classroom setting may not be easily accessible. For instance, in Uganda, it is quite unlikely to get German speakers using the language in real life situations for a teacher to capture. According to Sekiziyivu and Mugimu (2015, p. 43), it is a widely accepted fact by the teachers of German in Uganda that most of their learners are unable to engage in meaningful real life communications and interaction. To compound this challenge even further, background sounds and images may not be so easy to imitate. This implies that the learner will be disadvantaged in such situations that cannot easily be captured.   Nevertheless, the use of authentic

instructional materials in classroom to promote communicative ability is extremely vital.

In this connection, research evidence further echoes the significance of using authentic instructional materials in a language classroom. For instance, Azri and Al-Rashidi (2014, pp. 250-251) contend that

> Using inappropriate teaching materials makes learners face difficulties in learning a foreign language. Learners need to be motivated to succeed in learning any language. Therefore, teaching materials must be motivating and raise learners' interest. If teaching materials are not interesting and motivating, learners will learn nothing. In order to help learners learn better a lot of research has suggested using authentic materials.

It is therefore of uttermost importance that authentic instructional materials are used both for language teaching and testing, especially if the purpose of language learning is to acquire the skills for communication in the real-life situations. Research on the use of authentic instructional materials, however, has revealed contradicting data on its availability and use in real classrooms. For example, Menking (2001, p. 23) found that 82% of the instructors indicated that they used authentic instructional materials when appropriate. This on the face value appears a very significant level of the use of authentic instructional materials. We, however, have to note that this finding would have been more reliable, if the researcher had triangulated it with other sources of data collection like observation and possibly interviews instead of simply using a survey questionnaire.

On the other hand, Liao (2011, p. 14) notes that "because authentic instructional materials are designed for native speakers, they may be too difficult to many foreign language learners with lower proficiency". He suggests the use of simpler authentic instructional materials and realia. This suggestion however falls short of the fact that in a country like Uganda where the German language being introduced is not commonly used, as such, getting even the simpler instructional materials may be very difficult if not impossible for the teacher. Therefore, teacher training institutions have a duty to prepare the teachers. According to Oguz and Bahar (2008, p. 333) the "use of authentic materials in foreign language teacher training programs is useful both for developing the prospective teacher's foreign language skills and developing knowledge related to teaching profession adapting to real learning environments."
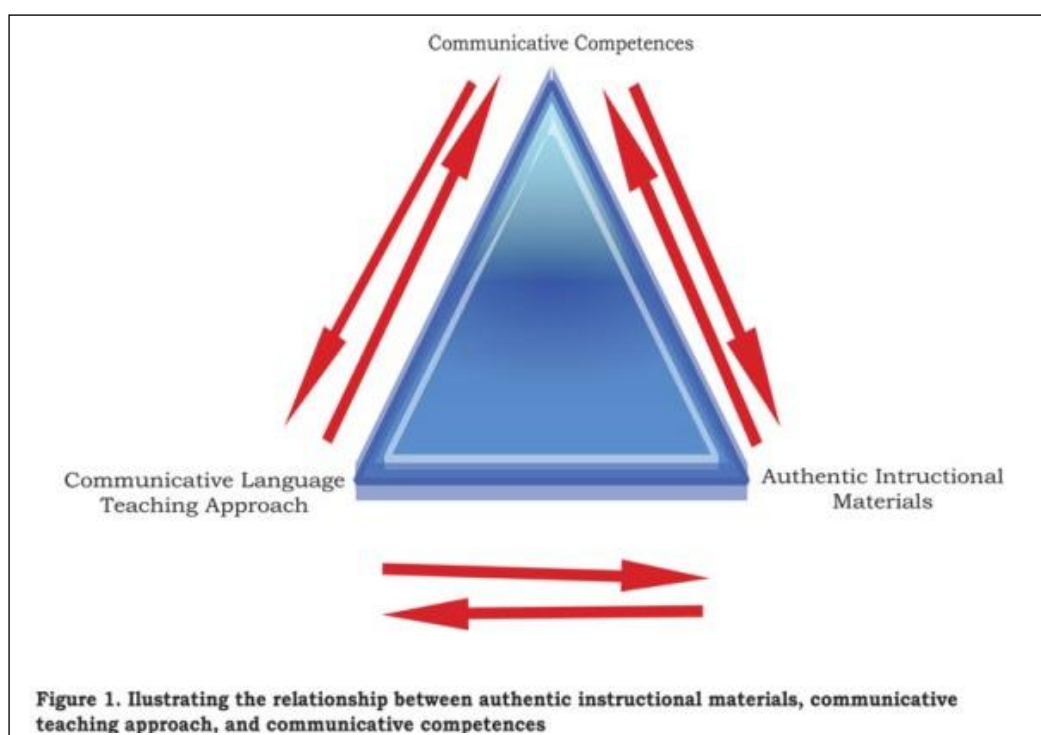
Furthermore, teachers need to be oriented with the key characteristics of authentic instructional materials. Marcella (1998, p. 7) emphasizes the following characteristics of authentic instructional materials for CLT:

- The instructional materials used take into account the needs and interests of the learners.
- The language activities in the texts lead to free communication.
- The texts provide practice with natural and meaningful communication.
- The texts use authentic instructional materials.

- The texts call for a great deal of student interaction i.e. group work, pair work, role play and problem solving tasks.
- The texts are accompanied by tapes for listening which include authentic language use.

We find Marcella's characteristics for authentic instructional materials viable for consideration when evaluating the authenticity of instructional materials in a developing context. Therefore, these characteristics were used as a benchmark in the development of the tools/instruments of this study. Figure 1 presents our conceptual framework which describes the relationships between the key concepts in the study.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between authentic instructional materials, communicative teaching approach and the communicative competences. We conceptualise that availability and use of suitable authentic instructional materials will enhance/support CLT approach leading to the acquisition of viable communicative language competences. And it is our assumption that learners who have gained appropriate communicative language competences could subsequently be able to use these language competences appropriately in real life situations. In that case, such people who are capable of using appropriate German language in real life situations could be used to generate authentic instructional materials to boost German language teaching. Furthermore, Littlewood (2014, p. 355) contends that "teachers can draw on CLT ideas and techniques… to design classroom practices that are real and meaningful to their learners and help learners towards fulfilling their real communicative needs."

Figure 1. Ilustrating the relationship between authentic instructional materials, communicative teaching approach, and communicative competences

The need to use authentic instructional materials to represent real-life situations in the teaching of languages is preferable, but also remains to be challenging particularly in the case of teaching a rare language, such as German in Uganda, where authentic instructional materials and facilities may not be available. This challenge is not an isolated one as it is the case in other countries (Ahmad & Rao, 2013; Raissi & Nor, 2013). On this basis, we investigate the availability and suitability of authentic instructional materials used for the teaching of German, as a foreign language in secondary schools in Uganda.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to establish the availability and suitability of authentic instructional materials being used to promote the learning of German in secondary schools through the CLT approach.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive case study design in order to fully understand the availability and suitability of authentic instructional material utilized in the teaching of German. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. The study scope covered all the ten secondary schools offering German in Uganda. **Questionnaires**: A questionnaire probing for teachers' understanding of authentic instructional materials with particular emphasis on their availability and suitability, relevance in meeting the needs and interests of learners, and appropriateness towards enhancing meaningful communication was utilised. **Observation check list**: an observation checklist was used to find out (1) the types of instructional materials available, and (2) their relevance to the characteristics of authentic instructional materials necessary for CLT in secondary schools. **Video recording**; video recording was carried out during the process of going around the schools to observe the availability and suitability of authentic instruction materials. **Interviews**: interviews for eight teachers were conducted to probe for their knowledge of availability and suitability of authentic instructional materials for teaching German language in their schools. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data obtained through the use of open-ended questions and interviews, was organised into themes and then summarised according to four categories representing CLT based on Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Similarly, data obtained through the observations was video recorded and then organised into themes that describe the characteristics of instructional materials for CLT. The video recordings were carefully observed and interpreted in conjunction with the observation checklist to identify details. On the other hand, quantitative data obtained from questionnaires were analyzed using statistical computer software (SPSS) to generate descriptive statistics such as frequencies, and percentages. These parameters were used to determine the

importance placed to each principle of CLT, and then presented using tables and bar graphs.

Results

This section presents salient findings from the study on the availability and suitability of authentic instructional materials to support the communicative teaching approach of German in Ugandan secondary schools.

Availability of authentic instructional materials for teaching German

This section presents findings on the availability of authentic instructional materials for enhancing the German communicative competence of learners. Instructional materials were classified into visual- and audio materials.

Table 1 gives the frequency distribution of the availability of visual materials as reported by the teachers and verified by observation.

Table 1: Availability of visual materials

Type of visual materials	Teachers' responses		Researcher's observation	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Course books	17	100.0	8	100.0
Newspaper articles	8	47.1	4	50.0
Restaurant menus				
Letters	2	11.8		
Instructional manuals	3	17.8		
Traffic sign posts				
Appeals				
Petitions				
Fiction	10	58.8	4	50.0
Poetry	10	58.8	2	25.0
Autobiographies	7	41.2		
Notes	10	58.8		
Summaries	7	41.2		
Other	7	41.2		

Findings in Table 1 show that course books were the major materials available in all the schools under study (100%) followed by fiction and poetry (59%). Results also revealed that other critical instructional materials for the CLT such as restaurant menus, traffic sign posts, appeals, and petitions were unavailable in all schools. This was an indication of lack of authentic visual instructional materials that could actually aid the effective teaching and learning processes of German with a meaningful communicative purpose. Table 2 gives the results on the availability of audio materials as reported by the teachers.

Table 2: Availability of audio materials

Type of Audio materials	Teachers' responses Agreement		Disagreement	
	No. of responses	Percent	No. of responses	Percent
Tapes	13	77	4	23
Radio	17	100	0	0
Any other	7	42	10	58

The findings in table 2 clearly revealed that the most common source of audio texts in the schools was the radio followed by tapes. As illustrated in Table 2, there was a general agreement between the report given by teachers and the observation of the researcher that radio was the major audio resource used in the classrooms readily available in most of the schools. Observations also revealed that there were a few newly acquired alternative audio materials (CD players) available in the schools. As reflected in the following quotation: *"We have of late acquired a CD player in the department. However, we lack CDs with lessons prepared for listening comprehension. Therefore, the CD player is not optimally utilised."* [TOG02]

It should be noted, however, that even in these cases, there was still lack of the CDs required to carry out a lesson using the CLT approach. This is an indication that most schools were not well equipped with the necessary audio instructional materials for use in effective teaching of German language.

On the other hand, results from the teachers' interview on availability and suitability of authentic instructional materials show that the instructional materials available in most of their schools were to a large extent not suitable for supporting the CLT approach. For instance, one teacher commented that, *"Materials used are got from old course books which were specifically adopted to fit classroom use. There is lack of authentic instructional materials which would actually portray a real-life-like situation. [TOG06]*

This means that the instructional materials available do not necessarily represent the current language use in Uganda and can therefore not be effectively used to teach learners through the CLT approach.

Similar sentiments were also expressed by another teacher in the following quotation: *"We normally use materials from old textbooks. We also have some old posters from Germany which help to show the way of life of Germans."* [TOG01] Furthermore, another teacher noted that, *"The materials used at present were designed to address learners at that level of German knowledge, however, the fact that they are [old] they may not capture well the interests and needs of the present day learner. [TOG08]*

On the issue of learner-centeredness, findings showed that there was generally lack of authentic instructional materials that could be used in such teaching approaches where learners are organised in groups and are required to produce

language of their own. As reflected in the following quotation by a teacher, "*Materials used are not so much learner-centred because they do not involve the learners in such activities that would require them to work in small groups or in pairs.*" *[TOG05]* This was supplemented by another teacher who observed that, "*Language activities in the texts cannot lead to free interactive communication, because they do not aim at the learners' ability to ably communicate in a free atmosphere. They can only be used in the classroom setting and not outside the classroom.[TOG07]* Thus, these materials are not truly authentic because they are not reflecting the real life situation.

In the same vein, teachers were of the view that, "*The available texts do not encourage free interaction. Learners simply work out the exercises individually to come up with the required responses. The teacher normally requires each individual learner to read the texts and work out the answers in their exercise books.*"*[TOG04]* This means that the available instructional materials are not designed to promote learners' communicative language use but are more suitable for teaching about the language, including the rules of grammar as it is in traditional language teaching approaches such as the grammar translations approach. In fact, a teacher commented that, "*Most of the texts available mainly aimed at making learners practice grammatical structures. Very little emphasis is put on teaching learners to communicate in the German language, within particular situations.*"*[TOG01]*

The findings in this section have demonstrated that the instructional materials available in the schools to a great extent were not authentic enough to promote the CLT approach. This is consistent with Ngoc and Iwashita (2012, p. 29) observation that even when teachers made an attempt to utilize the CLT approaches they were only able to make surface changes to activities, practices and materials.

Suitability of available instructional materials

The data presented in this section addresses suitability of the available instructional materials to prepare learners to achieve the desired levels of communicative competence in German. Teachers' use of suitable instructional materials was organized under four categories that represented the characteristics of CLT materials namely: *use of learner-centered instructional materials, social function of communication versus grammatical correctness, use of natural language, and promoting learners' free interaction*. The findings on these categories are summarized in Table 3 showing the level of agreement on how materials are used.

Table 3: Teachers' responses on suitability of materials used

Items	Agreement		Disagreement	
	No. of responses	Percent	No. of responses	Percent
Use of student centered materials	31	91	3	9
Social function of communication versus grammatical correctness	34	67	17	33
Use of natural language	67	79	18	21
Promoting learners' interaction	28	82	6	18

It is evident from Table 3 that teachers reported using instructional materials that possess the required characteristics for the CLT approach. This is so because their responses range from 67% to 91%. However, based on the researcher's observation, as shown in the Figure 2 below, revealed a smaller percentage of each of the categories of characteristics of communicative language instructional materials. For instance, it was observed that only 12% of the instructional materials were learner-centered, 12% emphasized the social function of language as opposed to grammatical correctness, 12% promoted learners' interaction and 35% used natural language. This discrepancy between teachers' response and observation results implies that teachers may not be fully aware of the characteristics of authentic instructional materials required to teach German using the CLT approach--so as to assume that the instructional materials they use could promote communicative language learning.
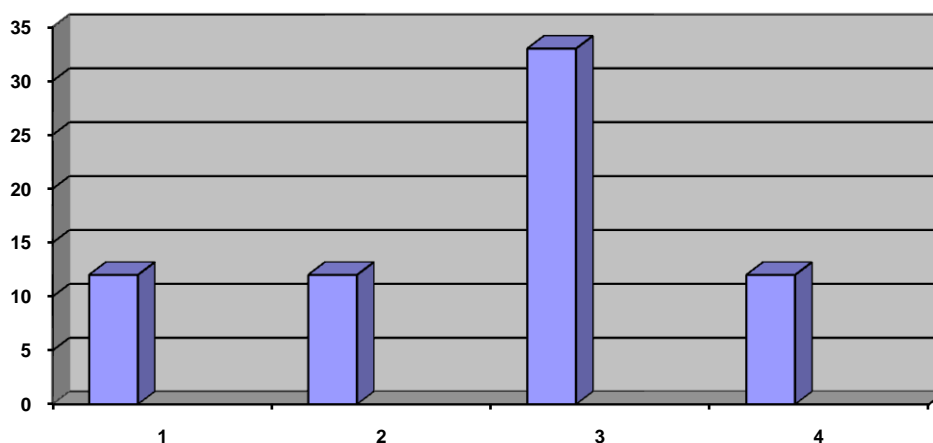
Figure 2: Percentage observation of the use of materials

1 = Use of learner-centered materials,
2 = Social function of communication versus grammatical correctness,
3 = Use of natural language, and
4 = Promote learners' interaction

However, findings from the observation were somewhat in line with the teachers' view that it was difficult to claim that they were teaching using the CLT approach, when the instructional materials available had not been designed for that purpose. This was evidenced in such teachers' responses as, "*Since the instructional materials available are not suitable for use in the communicative teaching approach, it is difficult to rearrange them for that purpose. We therefore use them the way they are and end up having teacher-centered lessons with very limited learners' interaction.*" [TOG03]

The findings in this section have demonstrated that the available instructional materials in the schools are not actually suitable for teaching the German language through the CLT approach.

Discussion

This article presented findings of the study on availability and suitability of authentic instructional materials to support the CLT approach in teaching German language in Ugandan secondary schools. The findings of the study have revealed that a variety of both visual and audio instructional materials for teaching German are available in the schools. Course books were the major materials available in most of the schools followed by fiction and poetry. However, results also revealed that the key authentic instructional materials such as restaurant menus, traffic sign posts, appeals, and petitions that are critical in the CLT approach were not available in all schools. This was an indication that instructional materials utilized in the teaching of German language in secondary schools were not authentic enough as required for effective teaching and learning of German within the concept of CLT approach.

Findings further revealed that instructional materials available in most of the Ugandan secondary schools were outdated and did not carter for the current needs and interests of the contemporary present day learner. This is reflected in the quotations given by teachers that follow: "*Materials used are not so much learner-centred …."* [TOG05] *[and] "… may not capture well the interests and needs of the present day learner.* [TOG08] Therefore, teachers that would like to use learner-centered approaches are challenged and consequently learners may be unlikely to develop the necessary communicative competences as applicable in the real life situations.

Furthermore, many of these instructional materials could not even permit free interaction of learners as reflected in the following teachers' response, "*The available texts do not encourage free interaction. Learners simply work out the exercises individually to come up with the required responses."*[TOG04] Yet, free interaction of learners is critical in enabling them construct their own knowledge thus, it compromises the effective teaching and learning process of German through the CLT approach.

Moreover, it was also not easy for the teachers to construct their own authentic instructional materials from their local environment given that German is not a widely spoken language in Uganda. Therefore, it is not surprising that even the way the outdated materials were actually being used in classrooms did not reflect the principles of the CLT approach.

As such, these findings are inconsistent with the argument of Omaggio (1986, p. 313) that relevance and authenticity of instructional materials was important to motivate learners in acquiring communicative language skills. The fact that authentic instructional materials are essential in CLT was further emphasized by numerous scholars (Harmer, 1991; Jian, 2005; Jordan, 1997; Marcella, 1998; Morrow, 1977; D. Nunan, 1989; Taylor, 1994). Nevertheless, in the Ugandan context, much as it may be ideal to use authentic instructional materials, these were not always readily available for use in secondary schools. The reason for this is that German is not a language used by many in Uganda. As such, teachers find it extremely difficult to capture appropriate and relevant authentic instructional materials as the case may be in a German speaking country.

However, given that German has been taught in Uganda for over forty years there must be a modest number of German speaking individuals. An important question is: how could such German speaking individuals be used as resource for teachers to generate authentic instructional materials? Hence, there is need to sensitize teachers of German about the importance of developing new innovative styles to create authentic instructional materials from the local environment. This approach should be in line with Weir (1990, p. 39) who notes that, "although full genuineness of text or authenticity of task is likely to be unattainable in the second language reading texts that we develop, we still need to select appropriate texts, to be read for realistic purposes, and we expect the reader to extract an agreed level of meaning under specified performance conditions". Although, it may be very difficult to find authentic instructional materials that could be used to teach learners' communicative competence effectively. Teachers are challenged to exercise their creativity and improvisation to make locally available instructional materials authentic and therefore suitable for supporting the CLT approach and promoting acquisition of the German language communicative competences.

Therefore, teachers are expected to generate authentic instructional materials for their classrooms. Unfortunately, findings have revealed that teachers were instead using isolated sentences to teach new grammatical structures. The appropriate use of authentic instructional materials in classrooms, the way they would be used in real-life were found to be lacking in almost all schools teaching German in Uganda. This disadvantages the learners because they may not even be able to do well in assessment and examinations. For instance, Kitao and Kitao (1996) asserts that it is not possible to simulate real-life when the instructional materials used to teach and test language are so far removed from real-life situations. Consequently, the instructional materials which are got from out dated course books do not in any way mirror the way language is being used today.

Generally, the CLT approach is quite demanding in the Ugandan context. For instance, communicative language exercises require that the classroom is large enough and that it is well arranged to allow for free interaction of the learners. As noted by Galloway (1993) "the scene of a classroom during a communicative exercise is active, with learners leaving their seats to complete a task". This was not the case for most of the schools, classrooms were much smaller than required to allow adequate free interaction of learners. It is evident from the respondents' views that even if teachers were willing to introduce CLT approach, their effectiveness was still questionable. This is so because of the amount of space available in Ugandan schools as compared to the number of learners in each class. Organising learners into work groups to perform communicative tasks such as dialogues, skits and games is such a difficult undertaking, that teachers would rather do without it and use only such tasks that do not require learners to move from their seats. Where the classroom practices do not involve such practices that allow for free interaction among the learners, then CLT approach is compromised. Teachers end up, therefore, by

simply engaging learners in constructing simple sentences and knowledge of the structure of the language other than emphasizing the ability to put such knowledge to functional use.

Conclusion

It is evident that the availability and suitability of instructional materials is extremely vital in supporting the appropriate teaching of German through the CLT approach. However, results from the investigations show that the instructional materials available for teaching German in Uganda do not conform to the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. This *article therefore has identified the challenge of using the CLT approach in teaching and learning of German in Ugandan schools due to the lack of authentic materials.* Consequently, the implementation of the CLT approach is undermined.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education Science, Technology and Sports in Uganda should emphasize the need to use authentic instructional materials that indeed reflect real-life situations. To do this, teachers of German are encouraged to develop authentic instructional materials using the accumulated cohorts of students who studied German within Uganda and the diaspora. By creating opportunities for them to come together in social gathering that require them to freely use the German language thus enabling teachers of German to capture dialogues, presentations, discussions, and conversations (authentic materials) that could possibly be used in schools. Similarly, teachers should be encouraged to creatively modify and make use of the available instructional materials to teach communicative use of the German language. Furthermore, the role of teacher training institutions in preparing well equipped teachers of German in CLT approach and the use of authentic instructional materials reflecting real life situation is critical. However, it should be noted that language in the real life situation, though used in a variety of forms, is normally used when the interlocutors are free to move around and express themselves both by word of mouth and by use of body language. Unfortunately, in Ugandan schools this is difficult to be achieved in most of the classroom settings, but rather in social gathering such as parties, meetings, etc. that could offer opportunities to enable this kind of free interaction to happen. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how to create fora that would bring together all German speakers in Uganda together thus creating opportunities for free interaction to communicate in the German language. Furthermore, given that in Uganda there are only ten secondary schools offering German, there is need to expand this study to neighbouring countries, where German is offered at a large scale.

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