The incompatibility of Libyan Teachers of English views and Practice in terms of implementing Communicative Language Teaching in some schools in Tripoli

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores why Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) specifically as an innovative approach, is not always successfully adapted into English classrooms in the Libyan context as viewed by teachers of English. It investigates the difficulties that impede the smooth implementation of (CLT) in Libyan secondary schools specifically from the teachers' point of views, as well as the reasons behind such views. Data of this study were collected from a questionnaire and follow-up interviews with 10 Libyan teachers and a classroom observation at state run schools in Tripoli. The research question is: What are the difficulties or barriers that teachers may face in implementing CLT? The findings reveal that adapting CLT was viewed positively by teachers, but several obstacles are found to impede it. The important findings included teachers' lack of CLT training, problems in accessing CLT resources, low-proficiency of students, lack of motivation among students, examination system and some issues to CLT itself.   However, they have also mentioned some cultural and situational challenges that hinder their implementation of CLT, as result; they blend it with other teaching methods.

الملخص

تستكشف الدراسة الحالية سبب عدم تطبيق تدريس اللغة **التواصلي (CLT)** على وجه التحديد كمنهج مبتكر بنجاح في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية في الوضع الليبي كما يراه مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية. الدراسه تبحثفي الصعوبات التي تعيق التنفيذ **السلس لـ (CLT)** في المدارس الثانوية الليبية على وجه التحديد من وجهة نظر المعلمين، وكذلك الأسباب الكامنة وراء هذه الآراء. تم جمع بيانات هذه الدراسة من استبيان ومقابلات متابعة مع **10 معلمين** ليبيين وملاحظة صفية في المدارس الحكومية في طرابلس. سؤال البحث هو: ما هي الصعوبات أو العوائق التي قد يواجهها المعلمون في تطبيق **CLT؟** تكشف النتائج أن تطبيق **CLT** كان ينظر إليه بشكل إيجابي من قبل المعلمين، ولكن

الدراسه اظهرتالعديد من العقبات التي تعيقه. تضمنت النتائج المهمة افتقار المعلمين لتدريب CLT ، ومشاكل في الوصول إلى مصادر تخدم CLT ، وانخفاض كفاءة الطلاب ، ونقص الحافز بين الطلاب ، ونظام الاختبار وبعض المشكلات المتعلقة بـ CLT نفسها. ومع ذلك ، فقد ذكروا أيضًا بعض التحديات الثقافية والظرفية التي تعيق تنفيذهم للـ CLT ، نتيجة لذلك ؛ يدمجونها مع طرق التدريس الأخرى.

Introduction

Teaching the English language in Libya has received great attention from the Ministry of Education. In the 1990s, the Libyan Ministry of Education made an ambitious plan of educational reform in the teaching of English by adopting Communicative Language Teaching (hereafter, CLT) as opposed to the traditional approaches used in teaching English. Teaching English language has become as an obligatory subject for all levels starting from the primary schools to universities. The main goal of adopting CLT is therefore to facilitate the development of students' communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) by placing students' real-life situations that require communication in L2.   For Richards & Rogers (2014), CLT is based upon the functional view of language which considers language as a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning and emphasizes the pragmatic and communicative dimensions rather than merely the grammatical characteristics of language. This does not mean ignoring the importance paid to grammar and vocabulary knowledge (linguistic competence); ability to utter statements appropriate to particular social situations (sociolinguistic competence); ability to manage a conversation (discourse competence); and the ability to repair communication breakdowns (strategic competenc).

Although CLT was introduced within an ESL context in the early 1970s, it took a decade to be adapted as an English Language Teaching Method (Approach) in an EFL context (Butler, 2011, p. 39). Richards (2006, p.9) explained that under CLT, "while grammatical competence was needed to produce grammatical correct sentences, attention shifted to the knowledge and skills needed to use grammar and other aspects of language appropriately for different communicative purposes, such as

making requests, giving advice, making suggestions, describing wishes and so on".

Historically, some traditional methods of language teaching like The Grammar Translation Method (GTM), The Direct Method and Audio Lingual Method (ALM) dominated language teaching but were not effective in making learners communicate with each other in English (Littlewood, 2007).Thus, it can be argued that (CLT) proposes a holistic approach to language learning which the traditional methods failed to achieve.

CLT was introduced within an ESL context in the early 1970s, but it took a decade to be used as an English Language Teaching method in an EFL context (Butler, 2011, p. 39). Richards (2006, p.9) commented that under CLT, "while grammatical competence was needed to produce grammatical correct sentences, attention shifted to the knowledge and skills needed to use grammar and other aspects of language appropriately for different communicative purposes, such as making requests, giving advice, making suggestions, describing wishes and so on". The primary goal of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is to develop the communicative competence of learners. Although a plethora of definitions have been offered in the literature relating to CLT, scholars, such Richards and Rodgers (1986), have agreed on a main feature of CLT: "It is learner-centered and experience-based" (p. 69). CLT is a reaction to the traditional approaches and methods of language teaching which emphasizes rote learning and "structurally (grammatically) sequenced curricula" (Brown, 2007, p. 47). In CLT, learning takes place "through the process of struggling to communicate" (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, cited in Brown, 2007, p. 49).

Communicative competence in CLT includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. Linguistic competence includes knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, sociolinguistic is the ability to initiate, contribute and end a conversation in a consistent and coherent manner, and discourse competence is the ability to enable learners /students to communicate effectively without any problems and breakdowns (Sauvignon, 2002, pp. 8-9). Therefore, in CLT, a teacher's roles differ from traditional ones; s/he has multiple roles: a teacher is an organizer of classroom activities, an assessor of learner errors, a participant in organized activities, a prompter to

encourage the learners, a source of language and knowledge, and an instructor to train learners on language skills. Moreover, the teacher facilitates the communication process between the students in the class and between students while conducting activities (Harmer, 2015). Thus, it needs authentic input of language use and provides opportunities for the students to use the language in a real life context. It also entails the use of wide materials and the employment of highly qualified teachers to manage the creative classroom potentials (Sun & Cheng, 2002).

CLT focuses on communicative competence of the students by using authentic materials and tasks that persuade them to communicate (Savignon, 2002).

It has been the effective approach that enables students to communicate. However, when it comes to the reality, teachers utilize other traditional approaches which reflect an incongruence between the theoretical and practical sides of this issue which needed to be studied (Littlewood, 2007; Mowlaie and Rahimi, 2010; Coskun, 2011; Fairley and Fathelbab, 2011). According to Littlewood (1981, p.1), "one of the most characteristic features of Communicative Language Teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language". Moreover, other aspects have also included learner-centered approach in which teachers can apply different activities such group/pair activities, role play, and games (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2013).

Despite the widespread use of CLT in various EFL contexts and serves a useful function in correcting shortcomings in traditional approaches, research has pointed to many sources of resistance to a CLT approach, much of which has been reported by teachers in EFL contexts opposing views on feasibility of implementing CLT in EFL contexts (Abdulkader, 2016; Chang & Goswami, 2011; Huang, 2016; Zulu, 2019). Studies conducted by (Chen, 2007; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004) have found that it is very difficult for teachers to conduct oral communicative activities with students who possess low levels of English language proficiency. CLT does not give an importance of the learning context, including the culture of both teachers and students involved in the language instruction (Holliday, 1994; Bax, 2003).

In the Arab world, studies conducted by (Javid, Farooq, & Gulzar, 2012) ; (Al-Jarf, 2008) and (Rababah, 2003) reported that CLT has not

produced the desired results. As a result, teachers have pointed out that "students leave the secondary stage without the ability to carry out a short conversation" (Rahman and Alhaisoni, 2013, p. 114). Al-Asmari, (2015); Bax, (2003) studies' claimed that CLT has always neglected, the context in which it takes place and this made it inappropriate for all cultures and contexts.

Internationally, research has been conducted to search for difficulties mentioned by teachers in different contexts where CLT is the adapted approach to language teaching. For instance, Anderson (1993) conducted a research on difficulties relating to CLT in China and reported the following challenges: insufficient number of teachers practicing CLT, mismatch between CLT's goals and the students' expectations, and difficulties in assessing students' performance. Teachers' low proficiency in English and difficulties in designing courses to meet the students' real needs are major challenges in implementing CLT in Cuba (Valdes and Jhones, 1991). In Greece, Karavas-Doukas (1996) conducted a research on teachers' attitudes towards using CLT in the Greek context and concluded that the teachers were inclined towards traditional methods besides though they have a CLT based curriculum. He questioned whether the teachers did not understand the basic principles of the CLT or they didnot want to implement CLT in their classrooms. Furthermore, Cheung's study (2003) on secondary schools teachers in Hong Kong revealed that teachers have challenges in using CLT due to the constraints such as large classroom size and lack of training in applying communicative techniques which was proved by (Incecay and Incecay, 2009) too.

 Kalanzadeh, Mirchenari, & Bakhtiarvand, (2013) got similar results to the previous ones in the Iranian context and classified the problems as (1- teachers' Lack of training in CLT. 2- misconceptions about CLT. 3- Few chances for retraining in CLT. 4- deficiency in sociolinguistic and strategic competence. 5- insufficient time for materials development for communicative class) They also reported some problems related to students such as 1- Low English proficiency. 2- Resistance to class participation. 3- Lack of motivation for communication. Other hurdles are educational problems such as lack of budget, crowded classes, insufficiency of support and grammar–focused exams. They also added problems created by CLT such as lack of efficient assessment

instruments, inadequate account of EFL teaching in CLT. All these negative views of CLT demonstrated a misconception of the role of group and pair work in the language classroom.

Similarly, Rahman et al. (2018) found that teachers articulated the importance of CLT, but did not implement its principles in the actual classroom. Coskun's (2011) in Turkey revealed the discrepancy between what the teachers believed and what they actually applied in their classrooms. He found that teachers excessively focused on explaining and practicing grammatical patterns in the classroom although they knew that grammatical structures should be practiced in communicative activities according to the principles of CLT.

In the Libyan contexts, many studies were conducted aiming at finding out the implementation of CLT in schools in Libya (Hussian, 2018; Orafi & Borg, 2009; Own, Razali & Elhaj, 2019). These studies were in line with other mentioned. They added the conditions of the Libyan context as another factor that impedes the appropriate implementation of CLT.

To conclude, although language teaching has benefited from technology in teaching and learning, teachers and learners still find many difficulties in implementing CLT globally. This inspire researchers and those interested in the improvements of the teaching learning process to seek deeply on the roots of these difficulties with the intention to find practical solutions to those practitioners.

Thus, this study, investigates the hurdles and difficulties that affect the smooth implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Libyan schools specifically from the teachers' point of views, as well as the reasons behind such views. In order to provide suitable and practical recommendations to different EFL contexts, the study raises this question: What are the difficulties or barriers that teachers may face in implementing CLT?

Research Methodology

A mixed method approach was used in this study to overcome some limitations of using the qualitative and quantitative approaches separately and to combine the strengths of both (Tashakkori, &Teddlie, 2003). Having the privilege of "the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data collected

concurrently or sequentially […] involves the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research" (Creswell, 2003, p. 112). It was a three-phase research design, starting with quantitative data collection through a questionnaire, followed by two qualitative data collection through interviews and classroom observations. The qualitative phase was used to explain the results of the quantitative phase. This triangulation helped to unravel the Libyan EFL teachers' perceived difficulties in relation to the successful implementation of CLT. The interviews enabled the researcher to probe into the difficulties or challenges that cannot be noticed through a questionnaire alone. Indeed, this step can validate data; help to ensure the credibility of the findings (Amores, 1997; Creswell, 2003).

The participants were 50 Libyan female teachers of English in Tripoli selected purposely because of their accessibility to the researcher. In order to tap these teachers' personal view points about the probable problems they might have experienced using CLT in their real classes, first a written questionnaire was distributed followed by interviewed and classroom observations. It was assumed that based on their experience in teaching English as an EFL, they could be representative sample of the EFL teachers teaching in the Libyan context.

Teachers' Number	Qualifications	Experience
22 (44%	Bachelor of Arts	3-8 years
15(30%)	Bachelor of Education	3-7
6 (12%)	Higher Diploma	5-7
7(14%)	Intermediate Diploma	3-12

Table (1) illustrates teachers' qualifications and experience

Findings & Discussion

Regarding the RQ, the findings revealed that almost all of the participants had a positive attitude towards implementing Communicative Language Teaching in their English classes. The interview and the questionnaire showed that. Some of the teachers interviewed showed that they had some understanding of what CLT is all about in general (Thompson, 1996; Littlewood, 2007). They expressed different levels of understanding of what CLT entails in lesson delivery (see table 2). The teachers understood CLT to be teacher-centred method where the teacher has the role of a facilitator/monitor and students interact through the use of many techniques such as role play and group work. For instance, Nadia stated that;

> *Communicative Language Teaching is an approach where students are allowed to interact with each other through situations given. The teacher can give the students group work or questions for them to discuss.*

Eman on her turn added;

> *I can say that Communicative Language Teaching is a method in which a teacher acts as a facilitator in the classroom.*

Items	S A	A	N	S Dis	Dis
Group and pair activities emphasize students' language practice.	32 64%	18 36%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
CLT emphasizes fluency over accuracy.	25 50%	17 34%	1 2%	2 4%	5 10%
CLT encourages communication in L2.	32 64%	18 34%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
CLT is a practical approach to language teaching.	25 50%	15 30%	2 4%	3 6%	7 17%
CLT is a student-centred approach.	30 60%	17 34%	0 0%	0 0%	3 8%
CLT emphasizes only pair and group activities.	28 56%	14 28%	0 0%	0 0%	4 8%
CLT imposes different roles on teachers.	40 80%	6 12%	0 0%	0 0%	4 8%

Table (2) illustrates teachers' understanding of CLT.

Scale (Strongly   agree   (S   Ag)Agree(A)   neutral   (N),Strongly
diagree(Sdis)Agree(A0

Although some respondents showed some understanding of the method,
other did not. They clearly could not explain what CLT was all about.
They literary stated they did not know or could not remember. Those
graduated from Faculties of Arts did not study any subjects related to
CLT or teaching in general. For instance, Noura admitted:

> *I can't remember what CLT is. I know we studied*
> *it a bit at college but I have forgotten unless I go*
> *and read again.*

22 out of 50 representing 44% of the teachers also reported that one of
the main serious problems in utilizing CLT, is their lack of professional
qualification and further training in CLT. Most of them stated that they
had heard only the name of CLT and few of them reported that they have
studied some chapters on CLT but that is only in the books. They had
never had anything practical concerning CLT. Naseem commented:

> *I can't remember what CLT is. I have not studied*
> *anything related to CLT at my college of Arts.*

Raghd continued:

> *I have graduated from Faculty of Arts and I*
> *know nothing about teaching methodology. I teach*
> *as I was taught. Ah, CLT, this is my first time I*
> *hear what it is.*

It seems that this lack of systematic training in CLT leads to a fragmental
understanding of CLT and made it unsafe for the teachers, to leave the
security of the traditional methods and take the risk of trying a new
unfamiliar method. The data from the interviews showed that more than
(44%) of the participants were not graduates of faculties of education and
consequently they did not study subjects related to teacher education and
they did not have reaching practice course. The lack of teaching skills
affects the effectiveness of CLT. In addition, the lack of systematic
teacher training increases the burden of those teachers and led to a
sketchy and fragmental understanding of CLT.

Items	S A	A	N	S Dis	Dis
Teachers lack CLT knowledge.	25 50%	20 40%	1 2%	5 10%	0 0%
Teachers have misconceptions of CLT.	33 66%	15 30%	0 0%	2 4%	0 0%
There is a Lack of in-service training in CLT.	32 64%	18 34%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
CLT requires teachers with high proficiency in English	29 58%	14 28%	1 2%	3 6%	3 6%

Table (3) illustrates teachers' lack of training and CLT knowledge.

A usual misunderstanding of teachers was that CLT focuses on appropriateness and fluency, and neglects accuracy. Therefore many teachers probably think that CLT does not focus on grammar and only teaches speaking. Teachers' conceptions about their role were not in line with those implied in the curriculum which is based on CLT (Orafi & Borg, 2009). Such misunderstanding lead teachers to believe that CLT contradicted their principles/beliefs about language learning and does not let them prepare students for the various types of exams which are grammar and lexis based that are of crucial importance to them. Teachers in particular those who teach students of third years (certificates)-class (9) at the basic education level and third year secondary schools in both sections) are under the pressure to make their students do well on such exams, often devoting valuable class time to teaching test–taking skills and drilling students on multiple–choice items. This was in line with this (Taguchi, 2005) which mentioned that school teachers have concern about the grammar, vocabulary based examination system. Thus, Rabab emphasized that,

> *Why I waste a lot of time on activities mentioned in the teacher's handbook. I need to teach my students how to deal with the final exam, train them and practice many questions in previous*

> *exams, so they can answer the questions and get*
> *good grades*.

Based on the above mentioned facts, the reader can judge the sever constraints in CLT application. **Hana** argued that,

> *I cannot understand teaching English without*
> *detailed explanation of grammatical structures*
> *because more than 70% of the exam contains*
> *grammar. CLT pays more attention to speaking. In*
> *fact, we do not have a speaking exam in the final*
> *exams of all certificates. I need to prepare my*
> *students to this exam.*

This view was raised by all the participants and this is mentioned in many previous studies in the literature not only in this context. For instance, Ahmad and Rao (2013) reported that some teachers did not want to use CLT because it does not prioritize grammar in teaching the language.

40 out of 50 teachers referred to the students' lack of motivation and resistance to class participation as some of the primary hindrance in trying to utilize CLT in class especially with secondary schools students. Data collected from class observation revealed that some teachers tried to conduct some activities recommended by CLT but the students were reluctant to participate for different reasons among which were their motivation and low levels. Students' low proficiency and the lack of professional training programmes for teachers were also perceived by the participants as major barriers the implementation of CLT.

Items	S A	Ag	N	S Dis	Dis
Students have poor English proficiency	40 80%	7 14%	1 2%	0 0%	3 6%
Students have passive learning attitud.	30 60%	15 30%	1 2%	2 4%	2 4%
Students are reluctant to participate in pair and group-based activities.	45 90%	5 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

Table (4) illustrates students' problems that hinder CLT implementation

These results echo those from previous studies (Li, 1998; Liao, 2003; Tsai, 2007).   One cannot forget that secondary schools students are teenagers are difficult to handle. The reasons behind such condition are the low levels of students, the exam.

Class size is another hindrance of implementing CLT in classes. Richards & Rogers (2014) clearly referred to that and recommended at most 12 students in a CLT class to enable teachers and students interact effectively with each other and with the teachers. The participants mentioned classes of 25-45 students in their classes. As a matter of fact, it might be difficult for teachers to manage practical implementation of communicative principles, activities and techniques like pair and group work and other cooperative learning activities in such large classes with adult students. This was also reported by Humphries and Burns (2015) in their study in Japan. Thus, Nour mentioned;

> *Look, there are 40 and 5 are absent today. What sort of activities can I use with them? I hardly can move to check them as you can see. The desks are heavy and no way to make group work in such condition.*

 During the observation, the researcher noticed the large number of students. This affected the teachers' plans of conducting some activities. In case, there are some, the opportunity of each student is reduced to the minimum due to the number of students. Teachers find themselves exhausted in class work and correcting homework respectively.

> Many times the participants referred to a theme in either the questionnaire or the interview as a limitation in CLT implementation in their own classes to be taken into account. 48 out of 50 (90%) of participants considered that their own deficiency in oral English constrained them in applying CLT activities recommended in the teacher manual in their classes as another burden. It seems that one of the important requirements on the part of the teachers intending to employ CLT is having a good training preparing them to implement CLT successfully.

Another problems mentioned by all the participants was the time allocated to English (four classes per week) cannot cover the materials in both the student's book and the workbook respectively. Aziza was worried stating,

> *I cannot finish the syllabus for third year secondary school. Time is not enough and right from the beginning of the semester I think of how I can substitute an absent teacher or borrow classes from other teachers. Last semester I came in the afternoon and gave classes. Do not forget the circumstances we face every year.*

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, the implementation of CLT has encountered problems and resistance in EFL classrooms which can be classified as teacher factors, the students, the educational system, and CLT itself. For instance, teachers' lack of teaching skills, training and theoretical knowledge of CLT hinder employing it successfully. For students, lack of motivation, low-English proficiency and reluctance to participate weaken the teachers' efforts to use CLT. These results echo those from previous studies. Grammar and lexis based exams especially of the third year of both basic and secondary school certificates, limited teaching hours, and large classes impede the teachers' practicing CLT effectively. Finally one main difficulty comes from CLT itself in terms of inappropriateness in EFL situations since CLT was developed in ESL settings where English is used outside classrooms. The teachers struggled to adopt CLT in EFL environments where English is used only in the classrooms and the exposure is limited. With the accumulation of all these factors, the success of CLT is incomputable.

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