

Libyan EFL Teachers' Perceptions about the Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching at a Secondary School in Libya

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Abstract

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This study focuses on the challenges that EFL Libyan teachers face in using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The aims of this study are to explore the problems that hinder the successful implementation of CLT at a secondary school and to find out the reasons behind these challenges. This paper is concerned with answering the research question: What are the main challenges that EFL Libyan teachers face in implementing CLT at a secondary school in Libya? It is qualitative study to explore EFL Libyan teachers perceptions and perspectives about CLT. Semi-structured interviews and observations in a number of taught sessions are used to generate data. This study forms a case study because it focuses on 10 participants who are selected purposively. The data are analysed manually by using thematic analysis. The findings of this study reveal that the major challenges are lack of sufficient knowledge of CLT, limitation of time for syllabus coverage, and large number of students. Moreover, the results show that the Libyan culture with regard to interaction of mixed genders has partially prevented teachers from applying certain activities that are crucial. Unfamiliarity with technology and insufficient technological resources are also perceived as challenges that have adversely affected the use of CLT activities. The results also indicate that the inspectors' evaluation of teachers which is based on the use of the traditional methods of teaching is the biggest obstacle that prevents the adoption of CLT. This research has the potential to provide implications for the practitioners and the language policy makers for the improvement of the CLT practices in the Libyan context.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Barakat and Miton (2012), the Libyan Ministry of Education (LMoE) has emphasised on the urgent need to rebuild and redevelop the Libyan education system because educators believe that the sooner the education system was reformed, the sooner it would be able to improve Libya's perspectives for growth. Training courses are proposed to improve the teaching and learning processes and to address the needs of the learners and the society (Rhema and Miliszewska, 2012). They also suggest that the curriculum and the

teaching and learning should be modified in order to incorporate modern methods of teaching and learning. Libya has recognised that English has become the language of the world; therefor, the LMoE (2012) states that learning should be through learning as social participation and modern methodologies should be used to meet learners' needs. In order to improve the quality of English language teaching, teachers of English have been encouraged to use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) because it aims to develop students' communicative competence in the target language in order to be able to

communicate efficiently in real-life situations (Orafi & Borg, 2009; Tauhiduzzaman, 2018).

CLT has emerged as a reaction against Audio-lingual method and Grammar Translation method (GTM) (Tauhiduzzaman, 2018). Linguists have criticized traditional methods of teaching language that focus on accuracy and producing grammatically correct sentences (Celce-Murcia, 2001). The CLT has emerged because of the urgent need to focus on communicative ability. For Maryslessor, Barasa, Carolyne and Omulando (2014), learners are unable to communicate in a second language in the past because of traditional methods of teaching language that focus on the form. Maryslessor et al. (2014, p.46) described the role of the teacher in using traditional methodologies, as "a tap pouring water into an empty vessel", and this means that a student is passive and they simply receive the knowledge that a teacher gives. Furthermore, language teachers realise that traditional methods of teaching are insufficient in enhancing learners' communicative competence (Maryslessor et al, 2014). Learners need to be able to communicate and express themselves, exchange thoughts and ideas, and negotiate meanings successfully (Savignon, 1997). The CLT is preferred methodology because it has the potential to increase the ability of learners to communicate and to pursue their studies in institutions and universities where English is the medium of instruction.

The Libyan English curriculum is a series of course books for different levels, titled, 'English for Libya', the main goal of these course books is to enhance learners' competence in the four skills (Orafi & Borg 2009). However, many Libyan teachers use traditional methods such as grammar-translation method and activities, although the current English curriculum depends on the use of CLT and student-centered approach (Al-Bakbak, 2019). CLT is a Western approach; therefore, many EFL teachers face challenges in the implementation of CLT. This paper is concerned with answering the research question: What are the main challenges that

EFL Libyan teachers encounter in using CLT in teaching English to secondary school students?

2. Literature review

This section includes two sub-sections. They are as follow: Communicative language teaching and challenges in the use of CLT.

2.1. Communicative language teaching (CLT)

CLT is an approach of language teaching. Nunan (1988) points out that the main characteristics of CLT are: 1) it focuses on developing the four skills; 2) learning through interaction in the target language, and 3) providing opportunities for learners to practise the language. The main techniques of CLT is that teacher should act as facilitator, student-centered classroom, and engage students in meaningful interaction (Tauhiduzzaman, 2018). Lightbown and Spada (2006) add that the teacher in CLT may focus on grammar when there is a need for more explanation. However, there are important points that teachers should take into their account in the use of CLT, and, according to Larsen-Freeman (2000), they are appropriateness in which the language used should be appropriate to the situations; message focus in which learners should be able to produce and understand messages, and risk taking in which learners are encouraged to learn from their errors. Teachers who use CLT are recommended to delay the correction of errors to the end of the lesson in order to reduce anxiety and fear that learners may face as Murphy (1986) states that students should be encouraged to communicate without using negative correction techniques that interrupt students, and this is due to the fact that when students commit errors means that they start to learn.

The main goal of CLT is to develop communicative competence which focuses on both learners' linguistic knowledge and their communicative skills (Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Maryslessor et al, 2014). Communicative competence plays a significant role for all language learners as Hymes states that "communicative competence refers to the ability to receive, understand, and produce suitable and comprehensible messages" (Hymes, 1972, p.256). Communicative competence is considered as social because learners are

required to have the ability to communicate in the target language and to understand the socio-cultural context in which language is used (Savignon, 1997). It could be said that learners who acquire communicative competence have both the ability to use the language and knowledge. According to Maryslessor et al. (2014), communicative competence refers to language learning in two main areas: strategic competence and grammatical competence. Strategic competence means that the learner can express him/herself in communication successfully and use strategies in order to avoid communication breakdown such as using fillers, paraphrasing, going off the point, and circumlocution. Grammatical competence relates to reasonable knowledge of syntax, morphology, semantics, and phonology.

Language is a means of communication which takes place within social context (Alam, 2018). Harmer (2005) indicates that English should be used as much as possible by the teacher and students because the aim is to communicate fluently and effectively in the classroom. Brown (2001) suggests that communication can take place in the classroom in three cases: 1) when the activities such as information gap activities and group and pair activities are carried out; 2) when the aim of the activities is to encourage students to use the language outside classroom; and 3) when students are motivated to learn the language. It is clear that activities play a significant role in enhancing communication. For instance, Larsen-Freeman (2000) points out that the activities such as group work, paired activities, filling information gaps, and using genuine materials have the potential to enhance students' interaction and to provide opportunity to build relationships between learners and their teacher that are essential for learning. Harmer (2005) summarises the main features of communicative activities, they are: 1) desire to communicate; 2) communicative purpose; 3) content not form; 4) variety of language, and 5) no teacher intervention. However, Harmer (2007) states that learners should have a reason to communicate and he considers contextualizing language in contexts is significant since this will stimulate learners'

desire to participate and communicate efficiently in the class.

2.2. Challenges in the use of CLT

Most of the studies about the challenges that EFL teachers face in utilising CLT focus on Asian context, little have focused particularly on the Libyan teachers in the Libyan context. For instance, Maryslessor et al. (2014) state that the main challenges that EFL teachers in Kenya encounter in the implementation of CLT are teachers' lack of training in CLT, limited time, wide syllabus, and the big number of students in class. Furthermore, Alam (2018) and Hamid and Baldauf (2008) indicate that shortage of qualified teachers, poor resources, and lack of modern materials used in CLT oriented classrooms are the main difficulties in the use of CLT in Bangladesh context. Although money and time have been spent to improve the CLT within Bangladesh, the expectations are not met (Ali and Walker, 2014). In addition, Chang (2010) points out that the main challenge is local culture of teaching and learning; however, he did not elaborate further to provide explanation. Moreover, Tauhiduzzaman (2018) have summarised the challenges in utilising CLT in Bangladesh, they are large class size, lack of qualified teachers, lack of modern teaching aids, imbalance between syllabus, assessment, and grammar-based exam, power relationship between teachers and students, teacher's lack of English communicative competence, and culture. However, he does not elaborate further to explain the reasons behind these challenges. Similarly, Barman, Zakia, and Basu (2006) summarise the main obstacles that hinder the application of CLT appropriately in the Bangladesh context. They are lack of adequate understanding of the communicative competence, lack of proper training, economic constraints, seating arrangement in classroom, poor salary of teachers, fund limitation from government for the public sectors, and class size. It is clear that there is similarity in the obstacles that EFL teachers encounter in Bangladesh context. However, other studies have identified the challenges in implementing CLT in EFL classrooms in Arab countries. For instance, Alharbi (2022) indicates that the major difficulties in the adoption of CLT in Saudi

Arabia are overcrowded classes, an inadequate training program for teachers, conflicted concepts about CLT, preference for the traditional methods of teaching, and the teachers' low English competence.

Many studies have been conducted about CLT in the field of English language teaching, but little studies have focused specifically on its implementation in the Libyan context. For instance, Abukhattala (2015) states that CLT is Western approach of language teaching, so it may not be suitable to the Libyan context. The reason behind that is the learning styles and social context in Libya can be in conflict with principle and features of CLT. EFL classrooms are based on the traditional methods of teaching, and this can be owing to the fact that CLT has not received support (Altaieb, 2013; Orafi, 2013). Similarly, Al-Bakbak's (2019) study about whether CLT is appropriate to the Libyan context or not indicates that the main obstacles are untrained teachers, lack of motivation on the part of students, examination system, and limited resources. He has also added that it is only when the challenges are overcome and the conditions for the implementation of CLT are improved, students can get benefits from CLT in their English classroom. The study of Al-Bakbak (2019) is different from the current study in that it is quantitative and only questionnaire has been used to generate data.

It appears that although EFL teachers use CLT in different contexts, they face similar obstacles. This study focuses on the challenges that Libyan EFL teachers face with regard to CLT in the Libyan context during the time of change and reform of the education system. The Libyan EFL teachers may encounter different challenges since they are teaching in the post-conflict environment where the Libyan education system is in the reform stage and the country is in redevelopment and rebuilding stages.

3. Methodology

This study was qualitative because it focused on Libyan EFL teachers' perceptions and perspectives about the CLT in terms of the obstacles they faced and the reasons behind

these challenges. Qualitative approach was used because it allows the researcher to use small sample, to utilise different method for data generation, and to gain in-depth data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The researcher intends to present the richness of the participants' experiences.

This research forms a case study because it focuses on a group of EFL Libyan teachers. As a case they represent group of people who are teaching English in a post-conflict environment. The researcher selected a number of cases in order to allow comparisons to be made across the case. The case study was selected because it has the potential to allow researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic under investigation and to refer to the context through observation (Yin, 2009). The sample in this study was 10 EFL Libyan teachers: 5 males and 5 females. The participants were selected purposively (i.e. purposive sampling) (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Denscombe, 2010). The participants were chosen according to certain criteria: they were all Libyans, they were teaching English to secondary school students, they had all obtained their bachelor degree from Libya, and they volunteered to participate in the study, but they were from different cities, their ages were between 23-50, and they graduated in different years.

The methods that were used to collect data were semi-structured interview and observation. There are three types of interviews, they are: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Kvale, 2007). Semi-structured interview was used because it is flexible in that it enables the researcher to follow up the interviewee's responses and to ask for clarification if necessary. The interview was conducted with 10 EFL Libyan teachers, the interview lasted about half an hour, and it was conducted in an office at a school, it was a comfortable place which encouraged the participants to express their experiences freely. The researcher conducted a "complete observer" role in which the participants were observed in a number of taught sessions (Robson, 2011, p.318). The observation includes: the nature of the interaction between the teacher and their

students, the time of teachers' talk and students' talk, and the shared activities. The observation was chosen in order to enable the research to gain first-hand data and to observe closely the respondents in the classroom (Robson, 2011). Field notes were used as complement to the interview data and to see the impact of the context (Hammersely and Atkinson, 2007).

The data were analysed by using "thematic analysis" in which the data were coded into apriori themes and emergent themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis was done manually. The data were collected in English language to avoid translation problems. However, it is important to indicate that the ethical issues such as permission, anonymity, informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy were all taken into the researcher's account during the research process (The bera, 2011).

4. Data analysis and discussion

The data was analysed manually into apriori themes and emergent themes.

4.1. Challenges and the reasons behind these challenges

4.1.1 Lack of sufficient knowledge of CLT

The findings of this study reveal that the age plays an essential role in the degree of familiarity with modern methods of teaching. The results show that old participants were unfamiliar with CLT due to the impact of their previous educational experiences. For example, Aish states:

I graduated in 2001, I am now 42 years old. I do not study the module 'Teaching English Methodology'. This is the first time I hear about it. I use the methodology that I have been taught in the past. I translate each word into Arabic. I give them grammar. The exam focus on grammar and answering the questions of the text. That is all. (Aisha interview)

Aisha's comment reveals that she used traditional methods of teaching (i.e grammar translation method) because of lack of

knowledge of CLT. Her perception indicated that her previous learning experiences had adversely affected her current teaching experience because she had no idea about the modern methods of teaching, particularly CLT approach. During the observation, Aisha did not give her students an opportunity to talk as she talks all the time and she depends on the translation too heavily rather than understanding the meaning in the context and learning as social participation. Altaieb (2013) and Orafi (2013) highlight that EFL classrooms rely on the traditional methods of teaching.

Furthermore, Amna who was teaching English to secondary school students for more than 18 years reported that:

What is CLT? I have no idea". Does it mean to be a good teacher or to teach English effecticely? The only method that I know is grammar-translation method. I ask each student individually and correct each error, if a student answers or pronounce the word in reading incorrectly. My previous teachers taught me English in this way. (Amna interview)

The comment of Amana reveals that she was unfamiliar with CLT as she had conflicted conceptions. Similar to Aisha, Amna used GTM, and this can be owing to the effect of her previous educational experiences as she was passive learner. It appears that despite the current Libyan curriculum is based on the CLT, she is still using traditional techniques. This could be attributed to her limited knowledge of the modern methodologies. Thus, unfamiliarity with CLT and the impact of her previous educational experience were the main reasons behind Amna's challenge.

However, the data showed that young participants who were aged 23-25 have a good background and understanding of CLT as they revealed generally positive attitudes to CLT and the possibility of its implementation in Libya. Omar stated that:

I graduated in 2018, CLT means that to give students an opportunity to talk. Our tutors had an experience in the UK and

USA. They divided us into groups and encouraged us to work together. At the beginning, we were surprising, then we liked as we discuss with each other. If I have no idea about a skill, I learn from my colleagues, and, in turn, I give them my new ideas. We share ideas and thoughts together. I am trying to apply this with my students, but it is a challenge to apply it. (Omar interview)

The above comment reveals that Omar had a different learning experience as he was taught by tutors who had a learning experience abroad. It is clear that Omar had a reasonable knowledge and understanding about the techniques and principles of CLT as he pointed out communication and shared activity. He also highlighted the significance of learning as social participation in terms of “complementary contribution” (Lave and Wenger, 1998) in which a student may have a skill that others may not have, so they complete each other. Omar’s perception also indicated the possibility of implementation in Libya; however, he reported a number of challenges (see section 4.1.3)

In a similar vein, Enas who had positive attitudes towards communicative activities reported that:

Students feel relaxed when working in pairs or groups rather than individually. They encourage each other and learn from each other through engaging in meaningful interaction. Students like activities with discussions and arguments in groups. Students do not like to ‘stand out’ by voicing their opinions because they feel afraid of their teacher and colleagues as in traditional methods. (Enas interview)

Enas perceived learning as social participation as significant in terms of scaffolding and complementary contribution. She also criticized traditional methods of teaching where students are required to answer in front of the whole class as this could lead to anxiety and feeling of fear.

Alharbi’s (2022) study indicated that conflicting concepts about CLT is one of the obstacles that

teachers in Saudi Arabia face. Although he highlighted a number of challenges, he did not elaborate further to explore the reasons behind them. This study showed that age plays an essential role in the teachers’ knowledge and familiarity with CLT in that old participants were unfamiliar with CLT, whereas young ones had a good background of CLT and had positive attitudes towards CLT and the possibility of its implementation in Libya despite the challenges.

4.1.2 Inspectors’ assessment

The results indicated that the new graduated teachers were motivated to teach and to apply CLT, but the inspectors’ perceptions were in conflict with them. The reality is that most of the Libyan inspectors were taught with traditional methods of teaching and they want their teachers to follow the same methodology. Otherwise, they will be evaluated by fail or pass grade. For example, Sara who had a problem with the large number of students said that:

Do you know where is the problem? When the inspector who was an old man came for the assessment, he gave me ‘pass’ grade. He justified this because I neither did use Arabic language nor repeat the new words on the board. I explained to him that it was the CLT and the goals of shared activities are to develop communicative competence and to use the target language, but he frankly said, ‘What is CLT? Why you did not correct the error after a student commit it? We want you to give grammar and to focus on the exam to help students to pass’. I was surprised! When I will teach again, I will use what the inspector wants (tears). (Sara interview)

The above comment indicates that the inspector was unfamiliar with CLT and its activities, and this had a negative impact on Sara’s methodology in teaching English. For her, the inspector did not like the CLT since he had no idea about its advantages and techniques (i.e. fluency and communication). It is clear that Sara’s inspector was familiar with GTM in which the use of the first language, grammar, and the immediate correction of error are all

valued. Thus, Sara felt surprised and decided to change to the GTM to please her inspector and to improve her grade.

Similarly, Murad said that:

The inspector wants us to use GTM. He told me that 'You should teach grammar and not to focus on interaction because the exams are going to test students' ability in grammar rather than speaking and listening. I tried to convince him that the curriculum depends on it is application of CLT. He also said that 'You should follow the instructions, otherwise report will be written with pass or fail' grade (silence). Most of my colleagues who is teaching English, particularly old ones focus on grammar. They think about passing the exam rather than enhancing students' communicative skills. The inspector wants a quiet class and only the teacher who speaks in front of students. (Murad interview)

Murad's perception reveals that like old participants in this study, the goal of the inspector was to enhance students' grammatical competence in order to make them able to pass the exam. Exams in Libya consist of some grammatical exercises and does not require the implementation of everything in the current curriculum. Although Murad tried to defend his methodology (i.e CLT), his inspector was not convinced and stuck to the traditional method of teaching. It is obvious that he had taught students in a way which is different from the one that must be followed in CLT. In Libyan class, the teacher talks all the time and students are silent since it is 'teacher-centred' and student are 'spoon fed knowledge', and this is also in contrast with students-centred and students' communication that are essential in CLT.

Ali also was aware of the inspector:

I like to act as facilitator rather than as controller in class; however, giving students opportunities to participate in shared activities and communicate can lead

to noises and disturbances. This will lead me to be negatively evaluated by inspectors and the head of the school.(Ali interview)

It is clear that Ali had knowledge of CLT in terms of his act as facilitator and situated learning through activities. The Libyan education system encourages silent culture (i.e. teachers talk all the time and students are silent) and teacher-centred approach (i.e passive learning or rote learners) rather than communication and student-centred approach (i.e active learning or deep learners). For Ali, giving students opportunities to share thoughts and ideas in shared activities could lead to the noisy because of the large number of students. Thus, this thing was not acceptable neither by the inspector nor the manager of the school.

4.1.3 The big number of students and the assessment process

Most of the participants reported that the big number of students has a negative impact on the learning process, particularly the implementation of CLT activities. While some of the teachers said that it is not easy to have control on the whole class, others perceive the number affected on their preparation of the participatory activities negatively. For instance, Omar pointed out that:

The number of students in each class and the small size of the class do not encourage me to use many shared activities. I am always thinking about moving desks and chairs in circle. When I ask students to sit in circle in pairs or groups, they make noisy that other teachers complain of it. Thus, I prepare only one shared activity in a month. (Omar interview)

Omar's perception revealed that he had positive attitudes and knowledge of the CLT, but the large number of students did not encourage him to use the participatory activities which are the backbone of CLT. Although he tried to divide them into groups and to change the setting of the class, it was too noisy that other classes complain of the sound of the movement. The reality is that it is a challenge to monitor all students, and this is likely to hinder the learning

process. In Libyan classroom, students sit in three long queues in class, and this does not encourage interaction among them.

Sara also confirmed that:

There are 55 students in one class. When I want to give them information gap activity or a topic to discuss or to challenge each other, there are many groups that I cannot move easy among them. Some students are reluctant to participate. They said that ‘the exam will focus on grammar not communication. This is waste of time’. As a result, I give more emphasis on reading and writing. (Sara interview)

Like Omar, Sara indicated the large number of students had affected the application of shared activities that are essential in CLT adversely. It is clear that Sara had motivation to assist students to develop communicative competence through their participation in shared activities; however, some students were resistant to engage in activities with their colleagues. The reason behind that is that students’ perceptions of the learning style. In other words, they want their teacher to concentrate on the exams in order to pass, and this is owing to the fact that the assessment in Libya focuses on grammar and writing rather than listening and speaking (i.e oral skills). Thus, students perceive their participation in shared activities as time-consuming.

The finding of this study are in line with the studies of Maryslessor et al. (2014), Tauhiduzzaman (2018), and Alharbi (2022) who indicated that the large number of students in class has a negative impact on the ability of teachers in engaging learners in shared activities and having equal opportunities to participate in meaningful interaction. However, the current study adds that the large number in the Libyan class affected teachers’ methodology in a negative way in that they reduce the number of participatory activities and focus on reading and writing rather than listening and speaking because students are not going to be examined in the oral skills.

4.1.4. Limitation of time and wide syllabus

The findings of the study indicated that all the participants perceived lack of sufficient time for

syllabus coverage as the biggest challenges because they were willing to engage all students in shared activities, but the time prevented them. The participants said that the limited time of the session with the large number of students prevented their focus on the four skills (i.e reading , writing, listening, and speaking). Therefore, teachers concentrate only on the important points that help students to pass the exam. For instance, Ali reported that:

The time of each session is 45 minutes. It is not enough to focus on all skills, especially with 75 students. I give them interaction in pairs for 5 minutes. I can’t divide them into groups because I can’t focus on them all as they’ll make noise and chat with each other. Also, I should complete the whole book for the final exam(silence). (Ali interview)

Ali’s comment indicated that time pressure with wide syllabus affected learners’ opportunities to practise the language in shared activities as required in CLT, and this had a negative impact on learners’ communicative competence. Like Omar and Sara, Ali also mentioned that the big number of students affected on students’ learning negatively since he was unable to monitor and control the whole groups. During the Observation, the manager knocked the door of the class, talked to Ali angrily and he asked him ‘to control the class as there was noisy and he must keep the class quite’.

The majority of the participants also reported that to make matters worse is the wide curriculum that had forced teachers to focus on how to help students to pass the exam (i.e reading and writing) and the oral skill (i.e speaking and listening) had completely been ignored since students were not tested on them. Mohab, for example, states that: “I give headlines and summaries. I read the texts and answer the questions with my students. I have ignored speaking and listening activities in the book because they will not come in the exam.” (Mohab interview).

The comment of Mahab showed that the wide syllabus prevented his ability to give equal attention to all skills. It is clear that he focused on reading and writing in order to help students to pass the exam. The wide curriculum had also a negative effect on teacher's performance as teachers ignore the deep explanation during the taught sessions.

The findings of this study with regard to time and wide syllabus are similar to Maryslessor et al. (2014) who indicate that limited time and wide curriculum have forced teachers to fast-track in order to assist students to pass the exam and not providing attention to listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, Tauhiduzzaman (2018) highlighted that imbalance between syllabus and assessment is one of the obstacles that EFL teachers face in the adoption of CLT in Bangladeshi. However, this study has added that the negative impact of the limitation of time and wide syllabus is not only on practical skills such as listening and speaking, but also on the teachers' performance in providing deep explanation and in-depth detail. Thus, the emphasis is on helping students to pass the exam rather than enhancing communicative competence and deep learning.

4.1.5 Gender issue and the Libyan culture

The majority of the participants in this study reported that the relationship between females and males was very formal, and this adversely affected the interaction and the application of some activities in the Libyan English curriculum that were based on the CLT. Rana, for example, stated that:

At the beginning of the semester, I tried to create groups of mixed genders in order to encourage them to interact with each other students, but I found that girls were reluctant to join groups with boys. Thus, I divide into two groups: group of males and group of females. As you know, it is our customs and habits. Some activities require a female student to play a role and a male to play another role to act the text in the lesson. Such activities, I did not apply them because females feel shy. They do not talk

to their colleagues. Just 'Salam alkom and Respect'. (Rana interview)

The comment of Rana reveals that gender is an issue in the Libyan culture because according to the Libyan culture, females should show respect to males by formal relationship and avoiding eye contact. For Rana, this limited the interaction between students of different genders and prevented the application of certain activities appropriately. Rana's perception also reveals that some activities and lessons in the Libyan English syllabus were not appropriate to the Libyan culture. Abukhattala (2015) points out that CLT is Western approach and it may not be appropriate to the Libyan context because the learning styles and social context in Libya may be in conflict with principle of CLT. This study has indicated that gender issue with regard to meaningful interaction between different genders has prevented teachers from applying some activities that are essential in CLT and some topics are not appropriate to the Libyan culture. Thus, the culture plays a significant role in the implementation of CLT.

4.1.6 Unfamiliarity with technology and insufficient technological resources

The findings revealed that although old learners were interested to use Lap top and Data Show, they are unfamiliar with them. Kamal, for example, reported that:

I have seen young teachers bring their Laptop and use Data show. They present pictures, grammar, activities. To be honest with you, I have a strong desire to use them, but I can't. The use of such equipment helps the learning process. The only equipment that is available in school is audio tapes; however, they are outdated and the sound is unclear. (Kamal interview)

The above comment reveals that Kamal was willing to utilize the technology in the class, but he was not good with it. It is obvious that he had awareness of the significance of using visual aids in the class, but lack of training prevented him. His perception also indicated

lack of resources in the school. However, the Libyan English curriculum is based on the use of CLT, and this requires using the visual aids and other resources that are the backbone of CLT activities.

In addition, Enas who had positive attitudes towards CLT said that poor internet connectivity prevented the use of independent learning:

I asked students to read about a certain topic in the curriculum. I divided them into groups to discuss it. Students are willing to research topics, but there were no resources like audio tapes, radios, textbooks and Data Show. There were no resources like audio tapes, radios, libraries, and textbooks. There were no resources like audio tapes, radios and textbooks. Therefore, I provided them with all knowledge. (Enas interview)

The comment of Enas indicated that she had knowledge of CLT and she encouraged students to be autonomous learners. For her, students had motivation to be responsible for their own learning; however, lack of facilities such as references and poor internet connection prevented her attempts to create independent learners.

Mohab who is 22 years old also added that:

Weak internet connection and long hours of electricity cut off are the main obstacles. I prepared games such as role play and puzzle yesterday. When I applied them in class with my students, the power cut off. When I was a student, the electricity cut off in the middle of the taught sessions. (Mohab interview)

Mohab's comment shows that he was motivated and enthusiastic to apply CLT, particularly the activities; however, the limited connection and electricity outage had adversely affected teaching and learning processes. The problem of electricity was before the conflict, but the conflict exacerbated the problem.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

To conclude, the results of the study reveal that the biggest challenge that EFL Libyan teachers face in the use of CLT is the limited knowledge of CLT on the base of old teachers, and this is owing to the impact of their previous educational experiences at university. Despite the fact the young teacher have positive attitudes towards CLT and implemented CLT, they have faced many obstacles. Almost all teachers in this study considered the inspectors' evaluation to the English teachers as unfair since teachers have been forced to use the traditional methods of teaching that include focusing on grammar, translation, repetition, silent classroom, and providing knowledge to students. It appears that there is a wide gap between what is in inspectors' minds and how curriculum should be introduced. The results also indicate that time pressure is the main obstacle as some teachers are motivated to apply CLT, but the wide curriculum that teachers must complete it for students to pass the exam has been regarded as challenge. The pressure for examinations lead teachers to concentrate on grammar, translation, and drilling to pass the exams at the expense of enhancing the communicative competence. Thus, teachers have chosen to teach students how to pass exams and not how to communicate and use English in different situations. This has the potential to lead to create learners who are unable to speak English both in school and after school. Moreover, many teachers reveal that some texts and activities in the Libyan curriculum are not appropriate to the Libyan culture and the main reason behind that is gender issue in which there is limited interaction between different genders. This limited the ability of teachers to involve learners in meaningful participatory activities, particularly role play. Moreover, the results indicate that some teachers, particularly old ones are unfamiliar with using equipment and visual stimuli that are used to provoke communication in lessons. Poor fund is also regarded as challenge that has affected the implementation of CLT and student-centred approach adversely.

This study suggests that adequate training courses all over the country that present the concept of CLT, benefits, techniques, features and activities can help to prepare teachers and inspectors for successful implementation of CLT. The current study also suggests to modify the curriculum and exam culture in order to encourage teachers to use CLT activities appropriately in terms of focusing on the four skills and meaningful interaction to develop learners' communicative competence. The Ministry of Education (MoE) should support schools by providing visual aids and equipment in order to create comfortable atmosphere and suitable environment to use CLT. The number of students in classrooms should be reduced in order to perform group work easily. Another significant suggestion is that scholars and government should take essential steps to remove all the challenges in order to create a suitable environment of implementing CLT.

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